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Benares and the English East India Company, 1764—1795

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To
THE AFFECTIONATE
MEMORY OF
MY REVERED PARENTS

PREFACE

The second half of the eighteenth century forms a very critical epoch in the History of India. It witnessed the death of one empire and the birth of another. The Mughal Empire, which remained a creative and constructive force for about one hundred and seventy five years, virtually collapsed and the destruction of the far-flung Empire synchronised with the rise of new powers, both internal and external. Out of the ruins of the Mughal Empire grew the kingdom of Awadh under Saadat Khan, Burhan-ul-Mulk, and his successors. When Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Awadh and the *wazir* of the Mughal Empire, was trying to dominate over the political arena of North India with the help of Shah Alam II, the Mughal Emperor, a new force, destined to challenge other Indian powers, came into existence in Bengal immediately after the battle of Plassey. The accidental sprouting of the British Empire, as a result of the skirmish at Plassey, began to germinate and to take deep roots, when Jafar Ali Khan was made, unmade and again made the *subadar* of Bengal and Mir Qasim was crowned and uncrowned at the sweet will of the English masters.

After being defeated at the hands of the English Company in the battles of Katwa, Murshidabad, Giria, Sooty, Udaynala and Monghyr, Mir Qasim sought shelter in the dominion of Shuja-ud-daula. Shah Alam II and Shuja-ud-daula readily agreed to help Mir Qasim and threw a threatening challenge to oust the English Company, the real master, and Jafar Ali Khan, the titular Nawab of Bengal. At this critical juncture, the East India Company had no alternative but to stretch their hands for friends. Situated between the Company's dominion in Bengal and Bihar and Shuja-ud-daula's country, the Hindu *zamindari* of Benares was naturally involved in complicated relations with the two.

The detailed history of the East India Company's relations with the *zamindari* of Benares from 1764 (when it first came into direct touch with the British power in India) to 1795 (when the administration of Benares was brought on the same line as that of Bengal)

had not been exhaustively studied so long with adequate reference to the different kinds of original sources that are available to the students of history in India. I have tried in my humble way to study this complicated subject. To make the subject easily intelligible, I have also taken into account domestic cross-currents at Benares and Calcutta and such other factors as determined and moulded the Anglo-Benares relations, 1764-1795.

I have tried to study critically and carefully the following kinds of sources :

(1) contemporary works in Persian, (2) contemporary English Records, both published and unpublished, (3) accounts, memoirs and journals left by contemporary and semi-contemporary Europeans and (4) contemporary Indian literature.

In the first chapter which is in the nature of introduction, I have traced the growth and development of the *zamindari* of Benares. It is primarily based on Persian sources.

Chapter II contains a study of relations of the East India Company with Balwant Singh (1764-1770). Here I have referred to the relations of Shuja-ud-daula and Mir Qasim with Balwant Singh and the English Company. This is mainly based on materials collected from the National Archives of India and from the Persian chronicles.

Chapter III traces the history of the relations of Chait Singh with the English Company from 1770-1776. Here I have referred to his relations with Shuja-ud-daula in order to explain the role of the East India Company which acted as his protector. I have also discussed in great details the discussions in the Supreme Council at Calcutta, which, I think is more helpful than the *pottah* to assess the status of Chait Singh. I have also referred to the internal feuds at Benares, which largely determined the fate of Chait Singh. I have utilised English records and Persian chronicles for this chapter.

The fourth chapter contains an account of the deposition of Chait Singh. The materials for this chapter are collected from the National Archives of India, Central Record Room, Allahabad, and the State Archives of the Bihar Government. I have also freely used contemporary Persian chronicles. In the Allahabad Record Office

I got some original letters of Warren Hastings written to Graham in one of which he asked the Resident to champion the cause of Ausan Singh as early as July 1778. I have referred to military operations of the English Company to show the heroic resistance offered by the people of the province, in which the Raja did not take any part. This chapter deals with the events of 1777-1781.

Chapter V is a study of the history of administration of Benares after the deposition of Chait Singh. In this period (1781-1787), the province was passing through transition. The materials for this chapter are mostly collected from the National Archives of India and State archives of West Bengal.

Chapter VI (1787-1795) indicates how Benares was gradually converted into the Fifth Division of the Bengal Presidency. I have tried to show how the province of Benares was brought on the same line as that of Bengal only with a few exceptions. The chapter is mainly reconstructed with materials available in the State Archives of West Bengal. I have also consulted the records of this period in the Record Room of the U.P. Government but found few new things.

My last chapter is a study of the commercial relations of the province of Benares, (1764-1795) with the English Company. It is based on materials available in the National Archives of India, the State Archives of West Bengal and the Central Record Office, Allahabad. In this chapter I have referred to the contemporary Bengali and Persian literature and accounts of the contemporary and semi-contemporary European travellers. For trade and commerce of Benares, we have got some very accurate reports such as Fowke's report of 1776, Barlow's report of 1787, etc. In this chapter I have tried to show how the rules and regulations of trade prevalent in the Bengal Presidency were gradually introduced into Benares which was thus converted into a unit of the British Empire in India.

My thesis being prepared in India suffers from one limitation. I had no access to the unpublished private papers available in England except the British Museum Addl. Mss. and the Melville papers, (microfilms of which are preserved in the National Archives of India) and some other papers (microfilms of which were with

Dr. N. K. Sinha). But in a thesis like the English East India Company and Benares, 1764-1795, access to all private papers is not perhaps indispensable.

For the preparation of this Volume, I am much indebted to Dr. K. K. Datta who not only suggested to me the topic of this research and gave many valuable suggestions but also lent me the use of some rare Persian manuscripts procuring them for me from the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna. I am under a deep debt of gratitude to late Professor N. K. Sinha who with great zeal and love guided me in my work from day to day and put at my disposal his entire collection of microfilms obtained from India Office Library. It is painful for me that I could not show him the published book prepared under his fostering care. I am also grateful to my teacher, Professor S. H. Askari, who spent long hours in discussing with me the various Persian manuscripts and lent me the use of a copy of *Mifta-i-Khazain* by Sambhunath. I take this opportunity to pay my best regards to my teacher, Professor J. N. Sarkar, and also to Professor A. C. Banerjee, and Professor A. Tripathi, whose never-failing encouragement has always been a source of inspiration to me. I am grateful to my esteemed colleague, Dr. H. P. Chatterjee, who took the trouble of going through the entire typescript, gave some valuable comments and took the initiative for getting it published. I am also thankful to Principal K. R. Chatterjee and Shri Kalipada Sengupta for their assistance in removing a few obscurities of expression. I am much obliged to Shri B. C. Sen, then an assistant archivist of the Central Record Room, Allahabad, for sending me a typed copy of Curwen's Translation of *Tuhfa-i-Taza* on his own initiative. I am morally bound to put in the name of my little son, Munai, who everyday enquired about the progress of this publication and kept himself forcibly restrained during the proof-reading.

I am grateful to the authorities of National Archives of India, New Delhi ; the Central Record Room, Allahabad ; West Bengal Record Room, Calcutta ; Bihar State Archives, Patna ; National Library, Calcutta ; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna ; Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta ; Calcutta University Library,

Calcutta ; for the courtesy and help extended to me during my visits to these institutions.

Thanks are due to an old pupil of mine, Shri Sunil Banerjee, for correcting a few pages of the proofs and also for undergoing the painstaking job of preparing the index of this volume.

I cannot conclude this preface without remembering Shri Benoy Chatterjee who had acted as my guide and philosopher since my school-days, and stood behind all my literary pursuits.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.N.	=	Ain-i-Akbari
B.M. Add Mss	=	British Museum Additional Manuscript.
B.N.	=	Balwantnama.
B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C	=	Bengal Revenue Department, Governor-General-in-Council.
C.P.C.	=	Calendar of Persian Correspondence.
F.S.C.	=	Foreign Secret Consultations.
F.P.C.	=	Foreign Political Consultations.
Hadia	=	Hadiqat-ul-aqalim.
H.P.C.	=	Home Public Consultations.
H.P.P.	=	Home Public Proceedings.
M.K.	=	Mifta-i-Khazain.
Proogs.	=	Proceedings.
Sel. Com.	=	Select Committee.
Siyar	=	Siyar-ul-Mutakherin.
T.B.	=	Tawrikh-i-Benares.
T.T.	=	Tuhfa-i-Taza of Khairuddin.
Tabsir	=	Tabsirat-ul-Nazirin.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Around the sacred city of Benares, famous under the name of Kasi in ancient Indian literature, flourished a very powerful kingdom in hoary antiquity. Kasi was in dim past a great, almost an imperial power, stronger than most of its neighbours, including Koshala and was said to have been twelve leagues in extent at a time when Mithila and Indraprastha each covered an area of seven leagues only.¹ Of the sixteen *Mahajanapadas* of early sixth century B.C., Kasi was at first the most powerful and played a prominent part in the subversion of the Videhan monarchy. But the glory of this flourishing kingdom began to wane gradually, till it ultimately fell a prey to the expanding Magadhan Imperialism. After the decline of the Kushan empire, the Bharasivas, a Naga dynasty, tried to revive the fallen fortune of Kasidham.²

During the early days of Muslim conquest, Benares grew into one of the most extensive and powerful kingdoms in Hindustan. Historian Shaikh Abul Hasan described the then kingdom of Benares as extending "lengthwise from the borders of China to the province of Malawa and in breadth, from the sea to within ten days' journey from Lahore".³ It was then ruled by Jayachandra, a Gahadavala Rajput, who opposed the combined forces of Muizzuddin and Qutbuddin at Chandwar on the Yamuna in the district of Etawah and sustained a disastrous defeat. Qutbuddin advanced up to Benares and plundered that wealthy city, the citadel of Hindu religion, by destroying "one thousand temples" and erecting "mosques on their foundations".⁴ The country was placed under Malik Husamuddin Ughulbak, to whom the local rajas and nobles, finding further resistance useless, professed their allegiance.⁵

Since this conquest, the kingdom of Benares had remained a part of the Turko-Afghan Empire, save the short period of the Sharqis of Jaunpore (1399-1479). Babar was the first to bring Benares within the Mughal sphere of influence, but its conquest, in the real sense of

the term by the Mughals, awaited the early years of Akbar's reign. Akbar divided his empire into 12 *subas* in 1580 and included the district of Benares within the viceroyalty of Allahabad⁶ and it remained so up to the reign of Aurangzeb who transferred it to the *suba* of Awadh.⁷

But "the province of Benaris was always regarded as a distinct entity with its capital at Benaris" and "was never annexed as a Sarkar to the Subah".⁸ Its status resembled that of the *sarkars* of Dhara, Satara and Kolhapur, which, though included in viceroyalty of the Deccan, maintained some separate identity.⁹ Benares was considered very important in the Mughal period, in so much that some of the princes of royal blood resided there as governors. Dara Shukoh, the eldest and the most favourite son of Shahjehan, lived here for several years.¹⁰

At the "commencement of the reign" of Muhammad Shah, the districts of Benares, Jaunpore, Ghazipore and Chunar were conferred as *jagir* on Nawab Murtaza Khan who, on his turn, entrusted the management of these districts to a relation of his, Rustam Ali Khan by name, on condition of his paying five lacs of rupees annually, with a right to retain the surplus for himself.¹¹ Rustam Ali Khan entrusted a Bhumihar Brahmin, called Mansa Ram, with the responsibility of collecting revenue from these *sarkars*.¹² As a mark of appreciation for Mansa Ram's efficient performance as a revenue collector, Rustam Ali Khan solicited Emperor Muhammad Shah through Murtaza Khan to confer upon him the title of Raja Bahadur. Mansa Ram declined this honour, when granted, for himself and begged that the same might be given to his eldest son, Balwant Singh, who consequently received the appellation.¹³

About 1728, Saadat Khan, the governor of Awadh, secured a lease from Murtaza Khan of the *sarkars* of Benares, Jaunpore, Ghazipore and Chunargarh on payment of an annual revenue of seven lacs of rupees. He reappointed Rustam Ali Khan on his promising to pay eight lacs of rupees as the yearly revenue.¹⁴ Mansa Ram, as usual, conducted the management on behalf of Rustam Ali Khan who soon fell into disfavour of the deputy Nawab of Awadh. Mansa Ram managed to secure from the Nawab of Awadh for his son, Balwant Singh, the *sarkars* of Jaunpore, Chunargarh and Benares

on condition of paying thirteen lacs of rupees as annual revenue.¹⁵ The *Kotwali* and the Mint at Benares, and the fort of Jaunpore were excluded from the *sanad* of authority which Balwant Singh received from the Nawab and these were bestowed on others. The *sarkar* of Ghazipore was conferred on Shaikh Abdulla.¹⁶ Thus Balwant Singh became *lessee de jure* of Jaunpore, Benares and Mirzapore on June 9, 1738.¹⁷

Within a year of these transactions, Mansa Ram expired and Balwant Singh obtained from Emperor Muhammad Shah, through the exertions of Amir Khan, the governor of Allahabad, a *sanad* under the seal of *wazir* Qamruddin Khan, conferring on him the title of Raja and the lease of the *sarkar* of Benares, and three other *parganas* on an annual tribute of thirteen lacs of rupees. Balwant Singh on this occasion tendered a *nazrana* of Rs. 21,775-to the Mughal Emperor.¹⁸

An able and ambitious administrator, Balwant Singh, aimed at an independent political status as his goal in life. He selected Titharia as the seat of his power and changed the name of the place to Gangapore. He got a mud-fort constructed there.¹⁹ Though making regular payments to his suzerain, he was shrewd enough not to let any opportunity go by unheeded to gain a concession out of the distress of his master for increasing his political authority. During the absence of Safdar Jang from Awadh, he increased his power by withholding the payments of revenue, by expelling the Nawab's *Sazawal*²⁰ from Benares and by plundering the neighbouring territories. He captured the fort of Bhadohi from Duswant Singh, the Rajput *zamindar*, towards the end of 1749.²¹ Muhammad Quli Khan, the deputy governor of Allahabad, was enraged by the news of the rebellious activities of Balwant Singh and advanced with a large army to chastise him, but was badly defeated near Bhadohi in the middle of 1750.²² By this spectacular victory, Balwant Singh's power and prestige greatly increased.

But Safdar Jang could not crush these hostilities of Balwant Singh because of the aggressions from the Bangash Pathans of Farrukhabad. Ahmad Khan Bangash, the Pathan leader, dealt a crushing blow at Safdar Jang in the battle of Ram Chatauni on the 23rd September, 1750,²³ and marched towards Allahabad. The

victorious Afghan hero made a speedy arrangement for the occupation of Safdar Jang's possessions of Awadh. Even before he reached Allahabad, Ahmad Khan had appointed Muhammad Amir Khan, one of his step brothers, the *faujdar* of Ghazipore and Sahib Zaman Khan, a cavalry commandant of Balwant Singh, and a connection of the Farrukhabad Rohilla chief, the governor of Jaunpur, Benares and Chunargarh, with orders to eject Safdar Jung's officials from the districts of South Awadh.²⁴ Fazl Ali Khan, the imperial *faujdar* of Ghazipore, having fled away on the news of the approach of the Bangash Pathans, the city fell to the Afghans without any resistance.²⁵ But Balwant Singh was not a man to surrender his territory without a stiff contest. Zaman Khan found that it was an arduous task to dispossess the turbulent Raja of his possessions and prayed to Ahmad Khan Bangash for further reinforcement. Ahmad Khan sent the same to aid Sahib Zaman and directed Akbar Shah, chief of Azamgarh, and Shamshad Khan, *zamindar* of Mahaul, to assist him.²⁶ A very powerful army, consisting of 1,700 horse and 10,000 foot, was collected. Thus reinforced, Sahib Zaman captured the fort of Surharpore after a siege of fifteen days and the town of Jaunpore fell in a few hours.²⁷ These military successes notwithstanding, the Afghan agent did not venture to march against Balwant Singh and encamped at Nizamabad, 32 miles north-east of Jaunpore.²⁸ Balwant Singh marched to Murahoo where he formed a camp for resisting the attack of Sahib Zaman Khan. Here news reached him that Ahmed Khan had arrived at Allahabad and had been besieging the fort. Threatened with the Afghan menace, the city of Benares was under the shadow of a severe catastrophe. Panic seized the people and normal life of the city came to a standstill.²⁹

Without being unnerved in the least in this hour of calamity, Balwant Singh tried to achieve by gold and diplomacy what seemed impossible by armed conflict. He tendered his services to Ahmad Khan and sent Lal Khan *Risaladar* and Rasul Khan *Bakhshi* with costly presents to him at Allahabad. Most of the Rohilla chiefs were won over with heavy bribes.³⁰ Owing to the pressure of the greedy Afghans, and also for diplomatic reasons, Ahmad Khan agreed to see him; consequently, Balwant Singh dashed to Allahabad and presented a *nazrana* of one lac rupees to the Afghan chief who

permitted him to retain one half of the territory, i.e., all places situated on the south of the Ganga³¹, and asked him to participate in the siege of Allahabad. Accordingly, the Raja assailed the fort from the direction of Arail.³²

Success of the Bangash Pathans was, however, short-lived and before the arrangement with Balwant Singh could be given effect to, intelligence of his discomfiture reached Benares. Balwant Singh at once drove away Sahib Zaman, the Bangash agent, from Jaunpore and by April, 1751, recovered his former possessions.³³ But his dangers were not yet over. He had to face soon the wrath of Safdar Jang who, free from Afghan menace, became determined on punishing all those who had sided with his enemy. Raja Prathipati of Pratapgarh was treacherously murdered at Safdar Jang's instigation at Sultanpore, about 36 miles south of Fyzabad in early March, 1752.³⁴ Getting the information of the sad fate of Prathipati and the Nawab's march towards Jaunpore to punish him, Balwant Singh became alarmed and fled with his family to the hilly tracts south of the Ganga.³⁵ Meanwhile, Safdar Jang marched through Jaunpore to Benares, plundered Gangapore, the capital of Balwant Singh, and sent an army across the Ganga to chastise the rebel. Finding Safdar Jang bent on ruining him, he thought it expedient to make peace and deputed Lal Khan, a trusted officer, with a presentation of two lacs of rupees and offered to increase the yearly revenue by two lacs. Through the good offices of Syed Nurul Hasan Khan Bilgrami, Lal Khan received a favourable hearing from the Nawab who agreed to pardon Balwant Singh, provided, he would personally pay a visit to him. In spite of all persuasions and temptations, the bird refused to visit the snare. Meanwhile, Safdar Jang received an urgent call from the Delhi Court. Having no adequate time at his disposal to deal sternly with Balwant Singh, Safdar Jang was forced to make peace with him at the end of March, 1752. The Nawab privately sent a *Khelat* to Balwant Singh, confirmed him in his possessions, fixed fifteen lacs of rupees as his yearly revenue and appointed Nurul-Hasan Khan Bilgrami the *Sazawal* to ensure regular payments.³⁶

From April 3, 1752, to October 5, 1754, Safdar Jang lived by the light of a star that had already faded. The evening of the Nawab

came with the promise of a dawn to Balwant Singh. He tried to take full advantage of the difficulties of his suzerain by consolidating his position. He transferred his capital from Gangapore to Ramnagar, on the other side of the Ganga, and got a stone-fort constructed there.³⁷ He planned a scheme of conquest of the long belt of land lying due south of the town of Benares, surrounded by the Ganga in the north, the Karamnassa in the east, the river Sone and the Kaimur Hills in the south, and the chain of hills in the west.³⁸ His primary objective was to possess the strong fortress of Bijaygarh, situated on a high hill, 2017 feet above the sea level, protected by mountain ranges in the east and south.³⁹ But between this coveted fort and Balwant Singh's country lay the territories of local chiefs. Balwant Singh first directed his operations against the fort of Patita, situated in the *pargana* of Bhagwant, at the foot of the hills about six miles east of Chunar. Taking advantage of the old age and senility of its governor, Jayaait Khan, Balwant Singh took possession of the fort by a sudden attack in the middle of 1753.⁴⁰ The strong fort of Latifpore, built of stone in the Kupsa hills about 10 miles from Chunar and surrounded by a deep moat and dense forests on all sides, was in possession of Malik Farrukh who died at the end of September, 1753. He left behind him two sons, one, Malik Ahmad, who lived in the fort of Ahraura, and another, Malik Ehsan, who held the fort of Latifpore. Prompted by the distress and division in the ruling family, Balwant Singh treacherously invaded Ahraura. Malik Ahmad was not prepared for any aggression from Balwant Singh who had sent condolences in his bereavement. Malik Ahmad lost his life while trying to escape. This terrified his brother, Malik Ehsan, at Latifpore, who fled away to Zamania 35 miles east of Benares, leaving the fort to a *killadar*. The army of Balwant Singh captured the fort and the country in a few hours' action.⁴¹ Balwant Singh now started military operations for the conquest of Bijaygarh. Finding it difficult to resist the aggressions from the Raja of Benares, Vijay Singh, the governor of Bijaygarh, started negotiations for the surrender of the fort which was purchased by Balwant Singh at the cost of 50,000 rupees in December, 1753⁴². The fort of Agoree, situated on the bank of the Sone about 12 miles to the south of Bijaygarh, next attracted his attention and was captured

from the hands of Vijay Singh's kinsmen in early 1754.⁴³ Thus the frontier of the kingdom of Benares in the south was extended to deep forests, uneven hills and the river Sone.

The news of all these military activities must have reached Safdar Jang in his crowded hours. Freeing himself from the embarrassments of court politics, he dashed to Benares on the 17th February, 1754, to chastise the Raja. Balwant Singh, as usual, crossed the Ganga and took shelter in Chandrauti, 12 miles north-east of Benares. Conscious of the difficulties of Safdar Jang, he bided time and soon the Nawab had to go away to attend more urgent calls, without taking necessary measures against him.⁴⁴

Balwant Singh next paid his attention to the eastern frontier of his kingdom. In early 1754, he participated in a dispute between his uncle, Dasa Ram, and Daim Khan, *zamindar* of Keyra Mangror, and ultimately brought it under his own control. To give a legal colour to his conquest, he sent a *wakil* to Raja Jankiram, the *Naib Subadar* at Patna, and agreed to pay Rs. 7,000 as yearly revenue. He strengthened his claim further by obtaining a rent-free grant of the entire *pargana* from Emperor Alamgir II. This arrangement was also confirmed later on by Emperor Shah Alam II.⁴⁵

The year 1755 saw the application to the *sarkar* of Jaunpore of the same policy as that Balwant Singh had adopted in other parts of the province.⁴⁶ The estates of the lesser *zamindars* were taken under the direct management by the officers of Balwant Singh.⁴⁷ He then turned his attention to Himmat Bahadur, the *zamindar* of Garwara, and Shaikh Kabul Muhammad of Machlishahr, because, both of them had sided with Sahib Zaman against him. He got the necessary pretence of attacking Himmat Bahadur, when the latter had expelled Ratan Singh, one of his *pattidars*. He despatched a large army to plead the cause of Ratan Singh. In spite of stiff opposition offered by Himmat Bahadur, his mud-fort was breached by the artillery and he had to fly away; but his son, Sukhnandan Singh, continued to create troubles on the border by uniting the unruly elements of the locality. Finding it useless to maintain the tract by sheer force, Balwant Singh settled Garwara with Budh Singh on a yearly revenue of Rs. 80,000.⁴⁸ He next attacked Machlishahr and treacherously captured the Shaikh in September, 1755, and the *zamindari* of Machlishahr came into his possession.⁴⁹

Emboldened by success after success, Balwant Singh began to plan the conquest of the historic fort of Chunar, situated on the Ganga, 20 miles due east of Mirzapore, which was the only place of importance in the kingdom of the Raja under the occupation of the Nawab of Awadh.⁵⁰ Mirza Ahmad Beg, the *killadar* of the fort, died in 1753, leaving a minor son, named Agha Khale, and the responsibility for management devolved on a slave, called Agha Mir. The death of Safdar Jang on October 5, 1754, and the consequent difficulties of the house of the Nawab of Awadh tempted Balwant Singh to intrigue with the *de facto* *killadar* for handing over the fort of Chunar to him on receiving a bribe of one lac of rupees.⁵¹ Getting scent of this conspiracy, Shuja-ud-daula, the new Nawab of Awadh, marched in November, 1756 against the refractory Raja of Benares and the treacherous *de facto* *killadar* of Chunar. Balwant Singh fled in alarm to Latifpore.⁵² The old mother-in-law of Balwant Singh, widow of Bariar Singh, *zamindar* of Pindra, offered a heroic resistance, at a place 19 miles north-west of Benares, to the forces of the Nawab who was struck by the valour of this lady and made a compromise with her and thus saved his face and secured the passage for the march of his army.⁵³ Agha Mir having absconded in alarm on the approach of the Nawab, the minor son of the late *killadar*, Agha Khale, was brought before him, who treated him with kindness. Shuja-ud-daula, however, took possession of all the belongings of the late *killadar*, which consisted of seven lacs of rupees in cash and other valuable properties worth four lacs, and appointed a new *killadar*.⁵⁴

After settling the affairs of Chunar, Shuja-ud-daula came to direct his operations against Balwant Singh in December, 1756, and ordered his troops to eject him ; but for his strategic advantages, the attempts proved abortive. Balwant Singh took refuge in the strong and secluded fortress of Bijaygarh and sent envoys to the Maratha chiefs for help.⁵⁵ Though sane persons acquainted with Shuja-ud-daula, such as celebrated Shaikh Ali Hazin⁵⁶ advised him to patch up his differences with Balwant Singh, the Nawab, in the vanity of his youth, refused to lend his ear to the advice and summoned Fazl Ali Khan, the *faujdar* of Ghazipore, and told him that he desired him to replace Balwant Singh.⁵⁷

Fazl Ali rightly realised, Balwant Singh was a hard nut to crack and proposed to the Nawab that he could undertake the arduous task of extirpating him, provided he was put in command of a force of ten thousand cavalry at least for a year and was paid ten lacs of rupees in advance for the compensation of likely damages to be sustained by him in a war against the mighty rebel.⁵⁸ These exorbitant terms of Fazl Ali set Shuja-ud-daula in a fix. At this juncture, Muhammad Ali Khan, one of his courtiers who was secretly in league with Balwant Singh, gave out that the death of Safdar Jang had released the forces of disorder and suggested that it would be imprudent to augment them by picking up a quarrel with the Raja of Benares, who, if annoyed, could certainly combine all the forces of destruction and devastation by having recourse to open violence and robbery, the consequences of which might sweep even Fyzabad and destroy all sense of security in Awadh. It was also indicated to Shuja-ud-daula, that it would be next to impossible for anybody to collect the revenue from these districts in opposition to Balwant Singh and would be more so for Fazl Ali Khan who managed to pay the revenue of the *sarkar* of Ghazipore with great difficulty.⁵⁹

When the camp of the Nawab stood sharply divided as to the line of policy to be adopted towards the defiant Raja, Balwant Singh sent Lal Khan with a presentation of five lacs of rupees to Shuja-ud-daula and offered an enhancement of five lacs of rupees on the annual revenue, if he was permitted to serve him.⁶⁰ Shuja-ud-daula realised, Balwant Singh was a necessary evil and was forced to swallow his terms. He confirmed Balwant Singh in all his possessions and conferred on him the *pargana* of Bhadohi as a *jagir* to keep him in good humour.⁶¹ (February 1757).

Balwant Singh did not forgive Fazl Ali for siding with Shuja-ud-daula. He paid one lac of rupees in bribes to the officials of the Awadh government and purchased their support for exterminating the *faujdar* of Ghazipore. He next started incursions in the territories of Fazl Ali who sent urgent messages to the court of Awadh for help; but owing to the bribes paid by Balwant Singh, the officials turned a deaf ear to these entreaties. Fazl Ali had to raise an army to resist the aggression from Balwant Singh. This action

of the unfortunate *faujdar* of Ghazipore was interpreted as a rebellion in the eyes of bribed Beni Bahadur, the deputy governor of the Nawab, who despatched a large army to crush him. On the news of the approach of Awadh army, Fazl Ali fled away towards Patna and the forces of Balwant Singh occupied the *sarkar* of Ghazipore. He confiscated Fazl Ali's property and distributed the 22 *parganas* at a fixed rent among his followers.⁶²

Having obtained possession of the district, he consolidated his authority by dispossessing all turbulent *talookdars*. He chastised Bhahuldeva, the Hyobuns Raja of Balia *pargana*, and Durg Vijayi Singh of Seringah. He crushed the authority of the defiant Rajput *zamindars* of Lukhnesar *pargana*.⁶³ In 1759 he ejected Vikramjit, the Raja of Kuntit, under the *Nazim* of Allahabad.⁶⁴

By the time of the battle of Plassey, despite sustained opposition and constant intrigues of the Nawab of Awadh, Balwant Singh, by dint of strenuous toils and tribulations, planted himself on a sound footing in a territory, "in common parlance said to contain ninety-six pergunnahs".⁶⁵ The English East India Company, which had established itself as the real power in Bengal and Bihar in the post-Plassey period, was destined to have some sort of contact with the neighbour on the other side of the Karmanassa. On August 6, 1757, the Fort William authorities described "Benares, a city about 60 miles beyond the limits of this Government, belonging to a rajah tributary to the Nabob of Owd".⁶⁶ And, the events happening in Bengal and Bihar and their far-reaching significance did not remain hidden from the eagle-eyed Raja of Benares, as is evident from a letter of Mir Jaffar's agent at the court of Shuja-ud-daula to Umar Beg Khan in which he says, "The Rajah of Benares has wrote (sic) several letters to Shuja-ud-daulah to enter the country or that Patna is empty".⁶⁷ Shuja-ud-daula must have ignored the call of Balwant Singh. But he along with Mahammad Quli Khan encouraged Ali Gauhar, the fugitive heir-apparent by blood to the imperial throne, to recover the eastern possessions from the hands of the rebels.⁶⁸ Accordingly, the prince reached Jhusi opposite to Allahabad on the 23rd January, 1759. After a few days, Balwant Singh paid his respects to the *Shahzada* and agreed to assist him with two lacs of rupees in his eastern venture. On this occasion

the Raja received a robe of honour from the *Shahzada*.⁶⁹ Balwant Singh did not accompany the Prince in his eastern adventure but began to raise troops. After the disgraceful failure of the expedition, Ali Gauhar had to pass through the territory of the Raja in late June, 1759, and received extremely civil behaviour from Balwant Singh who offered assistance to him at a place 10 miles away from Benares.⁷⁰

While Muhammed Quli Khan along with the Prince was engaged in military operations in Bihar, Shuja-ud-daula contrived to take possession of the fort of Allahabad. Hearing of this, Quli Khan withdrew on the 23rd March from the invasion of Bihar and marched towards Allahabad.⁷¹ Shuja-ud-daula asked Beni Bahadur and Balwant Singh to prevent him from crossing Benares. They opposed him at Sarai Sayyid Razi, 14 miles east of Mughal Sarai. But the Raja sent a secret message to Muhammed Quli that he had no enmity with him and could go anywhere he chose. But, on his arrival at Ramnagar, the unfortunate governor of Allahabad found himself completely surrounded by the hired band of plunderers of Balwant Singh. After robbing him of his wealth, the Raja permitted him to escape with a small band of followers.⁷²

In early May, 1761, Shuja-ud-daula arrived near Benares to assist Shah Alam II in his eastern expedition.⁷³ Here his primary objective was to crush the defiant and intriguing Raja of Benares who, however, fled to the hills with his family and property. Shuja-ud-daula tried his hardest to tempt him out of his secluded nest. Beni Bahadur offered his good offices, but Balwant Singh shrewdly evaded all temptations. He, however, sent Lal Khan with a *nazrana* worth one lac twenty-thousand rupees. The baffled Nawab had at last to leave Benares.⁷⁴

Balwant Singh was approached by the warrior-traders of Bengal in February, 1761, to assist Major Carnac who was sent in pursuit of Shah Alam after the latter had committed "much mischief" in Bihar.⁷⁵

The authorities at Fort William wrote to Carnac on February 13, 1761, "In case of your carrying the war into Shuja Dowlah's country, we believe that Balwan Sing, the Rajah of Benares, will gladly join you".⁷⁶ But the English Company did not consider it

necessary to carry on the negotiations with Balwant Singh as Shah Alam did not prove to be a serious threat to the Bengal Government.

Notes

1. H.C. Ray Choudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, p. 97.
2. K.P. Jayaswal, *History of India*, pp. 5-6.
3. Elliott and Dowson, *History of India as told by her historians*, II, op. cit., p. 251.
4. Ibid., p. 223.
5. Ibid., pp. 223-224.
6. Abul Fazl, *Ain-i Akbari*, II, p. 96.
7. *A History of Benares*, printed by Carruthers (1875), p. 2.
8. B.M. Add. MSS, No. 17072, Admission of Hastings in his defence before the House of Lords, 1788.
9. *A History of Benares*, printed by Carruthers (1875), p. 4.
10. Ibid., p. 2, K.R. Qanungo, *Dara Shukoh*, p. 22.
11. *T.T.*, p. 2, *T.B.*, p. 56. The *Jagir* covered districts of Benares, Jaunpore, Ghazipore, Azamgarh, Ballia and eastern portions of Mirzapore district.
12. *T.T.*, p. 2, A.S. Altekar, *History of Benares*, p. 59.
13. *T.T.*, p. 3, Wilson in his edition of Mill's *History of India*, IV (footnote), p. 361, writes that Mansa Ram got the title of Raja from Emperor Muhammad Shah in 1730.
14. *T.T.*, p. 8, *T.B.*, pp. 56-57.
15. *T.T.*, p. 10, *B.N.*, p. 100, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1407, "Being a simple minded and indolent man, Rustam Ali Khan was little fitted to discharge the difficult duties of his office".—A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Awadh*, p. 42.
16. *T.T.*, p. 10, *B.N.*, p. 100, "Nawab Abul Mansoor Khan made over the province of Ghazeepoor to Sheikh Abdoollah at a rent of three lakhs of rupees" *T.T.*, p. 15. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, pp. 89 and 99.
17. *T.T.*, p. 10, A.S. Altekar, *History of Benares*, p. 59. Oldman dates it 31st May 1738.
18. *T.T.*, p. 21, *B.N.*, pp. 122-128, *T.B.*, pp. 129-130. The sum of *nazrana* is mentioned as Rs. 31,737. Oldham, *Historical & Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 100—The *Sanad* covered Kushwar (Benares), Kutehar, Afrad and Bhagwant pargnas.
19. *T.T.*, p. 21, *T.B.*, pp. 129-130. Gangapure is 7 miles S.W. of Benares.
20. *T.T.*, p. 22. In the city of Benares the Nawabs of Awadh kept an officer who collected the revenues of the Nawab on his behalf without interfering in any way with the administration : such officer was called "Sazawal". Safdar Jang was appointed *Wazir* after the death of Nizamul Mulk, (*Siyar*, III, p. 279). During Safdar Jang's absence, Numkin Khan and Rup Singh were *Sazawals*. (*T.T.*, p. 21).
21. *T.T.*, pp. 22-23.

22. *T.B.*, pp. 172-175, *T.T.*, p. 25.
23. *Siyar*, III, pp. 296-297. A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Awadh*, p. 151.
24. *T.T.*, pp. 17 & 26, Khairuddin, *Tawarikh-i-Jaunpore*, p. 42.
25. *T.T.*, p. 17. It also records that Balwant Singh defeated Amir Khan in the battle of Zamania and the Afghan *faujdar* was put to flight ; Fazl Ali Khan having got rid of Amir Khan, thus resumed the government of Ghazipore.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Sardesai, *Marathi Riyasat*, IV, p. 11. A Marathi letter of early March, 1751, notes "In Benares, too, there is great commotion. For two days the city went without light. It has been in the grip of fear for ten days. The Bullock cart hire from Kashi to Patna has risen to eighty rupees."
30. *T.T.*, p. 27. Ahmad Khan had no intention of leaving one half of his territory in the hands of Balwant Singh. He wanted first to settle his account with Safdar Jang. After the destruction of Safdar Jang, Balwant Singh's territory could be easily conquered, *T.T.*, p. 28.
31. *T.T.*, p. 27, *T.B.*, p. 154.
32. A.L. Srivastava, *The Two Nawabs of Awadh*, p. 163.
33. Khairuddin, *Tawarikh-i-Jaunpore*, p. 42, Sardesai, *Marathi Riyasat*, IV. (Panipat Vol.), p. 13, *T.T.*, p. 29.
34. *Siyar*, III, p. 308, *T.T.*, p. 30. A.L. Srivastava, *The First Two Nawabs of Awadh*, p. 185.
35. *T.T.*, p. 30, *Siyar*, III, p. 308, does not give the details of the activities of the *Wazir* at Benares. It only records ; the *wazir* "continued advancing as far as Benares where he had much business to transact".
36. *T.T.*, pp. 30-31, *T.B.*, pp. 183-185.
37. *T.T.*, p. 31.
38. A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daula*, I, p. 25.
39. *T.T.*, p. 31, *B.N.*, p. 130. The fort of Bijaygarh was on the rocks "so exceedingly steep, that it must be very difficult, to ascend, and if assailed should act resolutely, next to impossible to annex (F.S.C., 5 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Hastings). It was approached by a single narrow and difficult path (Oldham, *Historical & Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 101). Hodges, *Travels*, p. 10—"The fort of Bidjegur is situated at the top of a mountain which is clothed with wood from the plain below to almost its summit. It was 50 English miles from the city of Benares."
40. *T.T.*, pp. 31-32, *B.N.*, pp. 46-47, *T.B.*, pp. 85-87. *T.T.*, *B.N.*, *T.B.*,—all the three contain common points, but dates mentioned in *B.N.* and *T.B.*, are misleading. The fort of Patita and its encroachments were absolutely impregnable. "The fort, though small, is of stone with four towers, a parallel rampart and a ditch, a great depth surrounding them and the town itself guarded by an entrenchment extending far beyond it and the space between the hills and jungles almost impenetrable". (F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 10, Hastings to Wheeler, 22 Sep. 1781.)

41. *T.T.*, p. 32, *B.N.*, pp. 41-44, is full of mistakes. "Latifpore environed on all sides by high and thick jungles". (F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781 No. 7, Hastings to Wheeler, 9 Oct. 1781). "The fort of Latifpore is made from the singularity of its situation, being immersed in a thick wood of bamboos and other trees close to the foot of the ditch and only one direct avenue to the fort which might be secured with a few men, if resolutely defended"—(Hodges, *Travels*, p. 10).
42. *T.T.*, p. 33, *B.N.*, pp. 131-138 contains factual mistakes.
43. *T.T.*, p. 34, *T.B.*, p. 133 gives wrong date.
44. A.L. Srivastava, *Shaja-ud-daula*, I, pp. 26-27. This is not mentioned in *T. T.*, but is found in *Tarikh-i-Ahmad Shahi* utilised by the learned author.
45. *T.T.*, pp. 34-36, *T.B.* pp. 185-186, F.S.C., 22 Apr. 1775, No. 2, Copy of a *Farman* from Shah Alam to Balwant Singh.
46. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 102, *B.N.*, pp. 139-157, contains detailed account of Balwant Singh's activities in Jaunpore district.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *T.T.*, pp. 36-37, *T.B.*, p. 189.
49. *T.T.*, p. 37, *T.B.*, p. 190.
50. A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-daula*, I, p. 28. During the Maratha aggressions on Bengal, Safdar Jang had got this fort from the Emperor in the middle of 1742 (*Siyar*, I, pp. 409-410).
51. *T.T.*, p. 38, *T.B.*, pp. 191-192. Srivastava names the minor son as Agha Mir, *Shujauddaula*, I, p. 28.
52. *T.T.*, p. 38.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 38, *T.B.*, pp. 191-192.
55. *T.T.*, p. 38.
56. Shaikh Muhammad Ali Hazeen was a celebrated scholar who came from Iran to India. "In that age he had not his equal. It is even probable that all over Iran and Arabia, there has not been a man so universally learned, as to be reputed a reservoir of every kind of knowledge, sacred or profane, spiritual or corporal". Emperor Muhammad Shah requested him to accept the office of *wazir* and to augment the splendour of his court. Alivardi repeatedly invited him to grace his court. But the sage kept aloof and took up his abode at Benares in the days of Balwant Singh. He died in 1765 at the ripe age of eighty five. Historian Ghulam Hussain Khan, and Nawabs like Mir Qasim, Shujauddaula and others paid visits to him. (*Siyar*, II, pp. 176-178, 517 and 525). Khairuddin calls him "one of the holiest men of that time" (*T.T.*, p. 52). He tried to dissuade Mir Qasim and Shujauddaula from their eastern campaign (*T.T.*, p. 52, *Siyar*, II, p. 525). For further details see *T.B.*, pp. 298-300.
57. *T.T.*, p. 38.
58. *T.T.*, p. 39, *T.B.*, p. 192.
59. *T.T.*, p. 39, *T.B.*, pp. 193-194.
60. *T.T.*, p. 39, *S.D.P.* Vol. XXI, No. 170 says, Balwant Singh paid 25 lacs of rupees to Shujauddaula.
61. *T.T.*, p. 39, *T.B.*, pp. 195-197.

62. *T.T.*, pp. 40-41, *B.N.*, pp. 179-181, *T.T.*, pp. 205-206. Oldham's assertion that "Through the influence of Bencee Bahadoor, the Deputy of the Viceroy of Oudh, the Pergunnahs of that district then twenty-two in number were made over to Balwant Singh" (*Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 102) is not acceptable because no revenue was charged for this *sarkar*. So it was a conquest and the government of Awadh might have acquiesced in the arrangement.

63. *B.N.*, pp. 196-197. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, pp. 102-103, *T.T.*, p. 42, *T.B.*, p. 207.

64. *T.T.*, p. 43, *T.B.*, p. 207.

65. *Siyar*, II, pp. 288-290. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 105.

66. To Court (Pub), 6 Aug. 1757.

67. *Bengal and Madras Papers II*, Clive's correspondence, letter No. 209.

68. *Siyar*, II, p. 289. For eastern expedition of Shah Alam see Sarkar, *Fall of the Mughal Empire*, II, Chap. XXV.

69. To Court (Pub), 12 Mar. 1759, Enclosure No. 12. It mentions the sum offered by Balwant Singh as 1,20,000 rupees, also C.P.C., I, letter Nos. 58 & 100.

70. Sel. Com., 6 Sep. 1759, Amyatt to Sel. Com., 29 Aug. 1759.

71. *T.T.*, p. 44, *Siyar*, II, p. 317.

72. *T.T.*, pp. 44-47, *Siyar*, II, pp. 321-323, *T.B.*, pp. 215-217.

73. Sel. Com., 20 May 1761, Carnac to Sel., Com., 12 May 1761.

74. *T.T.*, p. 46

75. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 915.

76. Sel. Com., 13 Feb. 1761, Sel. Com. to Carnac, 13 Feb. 1761.

CHAPTER II

BALWANT SINGH AND EAST INDIA COMPANY 1764—1770

A month or two before his final defeat at the hands of the English, Qasim Ali Khan, the deposed *Subadar* of Bengal, sent his *wakil*, Mirza Shams-ud-din¹ to Shuja-ud-daula for negotiations. In November, 1763, he himself proceeded to Balwant Singh's territory and encamped on the banks of the Ganga.² Qasim Ali Khan had with him multitudes of covered carriages, which contained "bags of white cloth, full of gold coins and of gems, as well as jewels of high value".³ His enormous wealth excited the greed of the Raja, who, taking advantage of his helplessness, set his band of "licensed thieves" to plunder the valuable properties.⁴ When Qasim Ali Khan complained to the Raja to check these depredations, the latter made only hollow promises.⁵ Utterly disgusted with the behaviour of the Raja, Qasim Ali Khan advanced towards Allahabad on December 5, 1763, to enlist the sympathy and support of Shuja-ud-daula.⁶

Balwant Singh also rendered some services to Qasim Ali Khan. On January 24, 1764, Qasim Ali Khan sent *jamadar* Shaikh Ismail Beg with 200 horse and four companies of *sepoys* to the Raja, who assisted them with *harkaras* and proper bazaars for their march to⁷ Rohtasgarh to carry off his treasures and effects deposited there.⁸ It was not possible for the English army to check these activities of "the enemy", without penetrating into Balwant Singh's territory, because the bypass, which brought them to the western gates of Rohtasgarh, lay around the hills through his country, and did not cross the territorial jurisdictions of the Nawab of Bengal at any point.⁹

On the morning of February 11, 1764, about 150 Frenchmen along with privates and *sepoys* of Mir Jaffar's army, headed by Madec, fled to Balwant Singh's dominion in consequence of a mutiny in the army for arrears of donation money. Captain Jennings asked the Raja to prevail on the deserters to return.¹⁰ He assured Jennings of his all-out efforts in the matter,¹¹ but

actually did nothing ; on the contrary, he assisted the deserters with money and guides for their journey to Shuja-ud-daula's camp.¹² The Secret Committee at Fort William wrote to Balwant Singh on March 1, 1764, to return the deserters¹³ and made it clear to him, if he would provide asylum to them, no concord could subsist between him and the English Company.¹⁴ But these threats proved fruitless and the deserters reached the court of the *wazir* with his assistance.¹⁵

What actuated Balwant Singh to conduct the deserters to the court of Shuja-ud-daula cannot be definitely ascertained. Crafty and cunning, wary and shy, tortuous and exceedingly shrewd as Balwant Singh¹⁶ was, it was not unlikely for him to pursue such a course of action for straining the relationship of Shuja-ud-daula with the English Company. Whatever might have been his motive, there is no shade of doubt that, as a result of his action, the political relationship between the *nawab-wazir* and the English deteriorated to a large extent.

On March 12, 1764, the Fort William authorities desired that Carnac should cross the Karmanassa and march into the dominions of Shuja-ud-daula, if the news of his alliance with Mir Qasim was true.¹⁷ But some positive difficulties stood in the way of Carnac. The troops, stationed at Bhojpur country, which had been very badly ravaged by Qasim Ali Khan, felt pinching distress for the scarcity and dearness of provisions.¹⁸ The army had to depend on the day to day supply which came over the river-routes from Patna.¹⁹ Moreover, the force, stationed at Bhojpur country, was not sufficient for the purpose and the expected reinforcements, under the command of Captain Pemble, had not reached them.²⁰

In the given context, Carnac suggested some precautionary measures to stem the tide of aggressions such as the erection of a magazine at Buxar for supplying the troops with arms and ammunition and the construction of a bridge over the Karmanassa.²¹ He also strove to court friendship of the Raja of Benares who, though apparently an ally of the *nawab-wazir*, had deep-laid and fundamental causes of friction with him, which could hardly be bridged over by any temporary alliance. A long series of correspondence had already passed between the Nawab of Bengal and the Raja of

Benares.²² It is claimed by Mir Ashraff that, while meeting Balwant Singh in January, 1764, in connection with his factory at Benares, he heard of his apathy to the Nawab of Awadh and informed Mir Jaffar, the then Nawab of Bengal, of this fact. Mir Jaffar thereupon sent Ahmad Ali, Mir Ashraff and Shabaz Khan for negotiations in March, 1764.²³ "After much argumentation," on March 18, 1764, the Raja agreed to enter into an alliance with the Nawab of Bengal on condition that Benares, Chunar and everything, which he held from Shuja-ud-daula, would be granted to him by way of *jagir*²⁴ and that the treaty must be endorsed by Carnac, on behalf of, the East India Company.²⁵ As the exigency of the situation did not admit of the delay in receiving replies from the authorities at Fort William, Carnac, without consulting them, became a party to the agreement between Balwant Singh and Mir Jaffar.²⁶

Receiving the communication from Carnac, the Secret Committee resolved on March 29, 1764, that Shuja-ud-daula having openly sided with Mir Qasim, "We can entertain no further thoughts of entering into a Treaty with him, on the contrary, we think it our duty to form against him all the enemies we possibly can; that proposed alliance with Bulwand Sing will, therefore, be a very proper measure and prove as well now, as in all times to come, a strong Barrier and defence to the Bengal Provinces".²⁷ The authorities at Fort William entirely approved of Carnac's endorsement to the treaty between the Nawab of Bengal and the Raja of Benares, and resolved "to protect and maintain Bulwand Sing independent, both now and hereafter".²⁸

When the English authorities in the eastern end was contemplating to cement this alliance and reckon on it, Balwant Singh had to confront a tricky problem. On March 20, Mir Qasim and Beni-Bahadur, the deputy of Shuja-ud-daula, arrived at Benares with a vast army and they were soon joined by Shuja-ud-daula and Shah Alam.²⁹ They proceeded up to Baluaghat in the village of Balua, on the bank of the Ganga, and encamped there.³⁰

As usual, Balwant Singh, at the approach of the *nawab-wazir* with a vast army, had retired with his family and property to Latifpore, where repeated summons to appear before the Nawab reached him. The well-wishers of the Raja advised him, if Beni-

Bahadur pledged himself for his safety, he would do well in joining the expedition. Balwant Singh deputed his trusted agent, Lal Khan, to the camp of Shuja-ud-daula with valuable gifts which were presented to the *wazir* by Beni Bahadur. Lal Khan returned to Latifpore with the assurance of honour and safety. But Balwant Singh did not immediately come out of his stronghold to meet the Nawab.³¹

In the last week of March, 1764, Shuja-ud-daula threw a bridge of boats over the Ganga and the whole of his army, "as numerous as the billows of the sea," crossed the river on the 26th March.³² Shuja-ud-daula encamped on the eastern bank of the Ganga and waited for the arrival of Balwant Singh.³³

Khairuddin records that, in spite of assurances of the *nawab-wazir* and his officials, Balwant Singh delayed leaving his stronghold, and did not see the *wazir* till the latter had reached Daudnagar.³⁴ Ghulam Hussain Khan suggests, that "at about this time" in his own territory the Raja was persuaded to meet the *nawab-wazir* by Beni Bahadur and all the commanders of Shuja-ud-daula, who pledged themselves for his safety, and he accepted the advice of Nurul Hasan Khan Bilgrami, the Nawab's *sazawal* at Benares, who had been very friendly with him. "Induced by the persuasions of so many persons of character, who pledged themselves for his safety, he now for the first time made his appearance in the Camp of a Viceroy ; but it was in the middle of two or three thousand picked horse and several thousand men of infantry, all attached to his person ; and it was with such a cortege he paid his respects to the Vezir".³⁵

On an analysis of facts, it appears that there is nothing improbable in Ghulam Hussain's version and that it fits in well with circumstantial evidences and also with the references in the English records. As Shuja-ud-daula was engaged in the planning of a campaign against the English, prudence dictated to him that he should not embarrass himself with fresh problems by attempting to destroy the refractory Raja of Benares. From the side of Balwant Singh, as he had already entered into a secret treaty with the Nawab of Bengal, it would be a most politic and expedient step to remove his suzerain's suspicion of him by keeping up an outward show of allegiance to the Nawab. It may be noted in this connec-

tion that Carnac in his letter to the Secret Committee, on the 17th April, charged Balwant Singh with double-dealing,³⁶ and this letter definitely indicates that Balwant Singh must have come to an understanding with the *nawab-wazir* some time before his joining the forces of the Nawab of Awadh at Daudnagar on the 23rd April. So, in all probability, Balwant Singh paid his respects to the *wazir* on the eastern side of the Ganga sometime between the 26th March and the 8th April, 1764.

Notwithstanding the warlike preparations of Shuja-ud-daula and Mir Qasim, Carnac could not launch any offensive against them, because the Nawab of Bengal was utterly averse from entering into the *wazir's* country, for that might be interpreted as the commencement of hostilities on his part. Moreover, the military strategists in the camp strongly contended that it would be unwise to advance from advantageously placed quarters of Buxar without being sure of supplies.³⁷ But the factor which mattered most to the Major was Balwant Singh's dubious role, which, in his calculation, aided the war strategy of Shuja-ud-daula. The *wazir* had been biding his time on the eastern bank of the Ganga in the hope of alluring the English soldiers to march on, so that he could send his soldiers by the backdoor to drive a wedge between the English army, posted at Buxar, and those in their headquarters at Patna.³⁸ "Balwant Singh's behaviour", of which Carnac had received an account, convinced him that his proposed alliance with the English was "only a concerted scheme" to draw them "further on and so favour Shujah Dowlah's design of getting between" the English army, posted at Buxar, and those at Patna.³⁹ It must be admitted that Carnac failed miserably to understand the position of Balwant Singh who, in the midst of the forces of Shuja-ud-daula, had to side, at least outwardly, with the *nawab-wazir*, but was the last person to play the Nawab's game. Carnac therefore broke up the camp on 4th April and began his retreat towards Patna, not exactly being "terror-stricken"⁴⁰ by the numerical superiority of the *wazir's* army but for strategic reasons, and also because of Balwant Singh's refusal to espouse the cause of the British in their hour of peril.⁴¹

On April 8, the Emperor, the *nawab-wazir*, and the refugee-

nawab left the camp on the bank of the Ganga and began to advance with their vast army in the directions of Daudnagar. On the 23rd April, Balwant Singh joined the allied army at Daudnagar, situated on the bank of the Sone, with 2000 horse and 5000 foot. The *nawab-wazir*, under the exigencies of the time, was obliged to receive him with friendly expressions and attached his force to that of Beni-Bahadur. Balwant Singh had brought with him a large number of thieves who were "very active in the camp of the army and ceased not day or night from stealing". Daily complaints were made to the *wazir* who was much irritated by these occurrences. So Balwant Singh's alliance with the *wazir* did not prove to be a source of strength to the latter, it rather weakened his cause.⁴²

The combined army, however, marched triumphantly through Arwal up to the outskirts of Patna. A fierce battle was fought on May 3, 1764, at Panch-Pahari. Balwant Singh stood with his army to the left of the *nawab-wazir*, but took no active part in the battle which ended in the defeat of Shuja-ud-daula. In the subsequent military operations round the city of Patna, virtually, he played no role except that on the 12th, or the 13th, he fired some ineffective volleys on the city walls.⁴³ Naturally, the *nawab-wazir* grew suspicious of his inaction and ordered him to cross the Ganga and to canton his troops in the district of Ghazipore, opposite to Buxar.⁴⁴

Despite Balwant Singh's siding with the invading army, the Fort William authorities did not give up the hope of winning him over to their side. On May 10, 1764, they asked Carnac to send a company of force across the Ganga into Ghazipore, which might "induce Bulwand Sing to come over to" their interest and harass Shuja-ud-daula by cutting off his lines of supply.⁴⁵ It was expected, that the possession of Ghazipore would assist the Company to defray the war-expenses and also force Shuja-ud-daula to abandon his aggressive designs.⁴⁶

A detachment, under the command of Champion, was sent to Ghazipore on June 1, 1764.⁴⁷ It continued to cause considerable damages till the beginning of rains in late June.⁴⁸ As a result of these activities in Ghazipore, Shuja-ud-daula had to retreat to his own dominion. The English detachment destroyed a large quantity

of grain and "Some hundreds of villages which had been very flourishing".⁴⁹ But Balwant Singh did not take any step against the English, he rather remained an idle spectator to the outrages committed by them within his dominion.⁵⁰

Even during the campaigns of Shuja-ud-daula, which terminated in his utter discomfiture in the battle of Buxar, on the 23rd October, 1764, Balwant Singh remained in the village of Amla in the Muhammadabad *pargana* of Ghazipore district, at the head of a contingent of 2000 cavalry and 5000 infantry. But he did not participate in the battle under the pretence of sickness.⁵¹

This attitude of Balwant Singh, who had deep-seated enmity with Shuja-ud-daula and who courted the friendship of the Nawab of Bengal and the Company, but who subsequently helped the *nawab-wazir* (at least outwardly) in the initial stage of the conflict and maintained neutrality at the time of deepening of the crisis, requires some explanation. Mir Ashraff wrote to Governor Vansittart on August 7, 1764, that Balwant Singh became lukewarm because his transactions with the English were reported to Shuja-ud-daula by Maharaja Nandakumar.⁵² He also contended that Nandakumar had instigated Balwant Singh to support the cause of Shuja-ud-daula.⁵³ On an enquiry by top-ranking officials of the East India Company, the allegations against Nandakumar could not be substantiated. It was also subsequently discovered by the Nawab of Bengal that Mir Ashraff and Balwant Singh had personal causes to be annoyed with Nandakumar.⁵⁴

The policy of Balwant Singh was determined by certain fundamental factors. The field of operation of his sworn enemy, Shuja-ud-daula, could be reached through his own territory. As he was the ruler of such a strategic country, it would have been unwise on his part to defy his overlord openly. Moreover, it was but natural for a man like Balwant Singh, a typical product of the 18th century India,⁵⁵ to sit on the fence, watching the course of battle and then striking a favourable bargain by joining the victorious party.

After the success of the English army in the battle of Buxar, Shah Alam II, now freed from Shuja-ud-daula's tutelege, sent for the English⁵⁶ representative, congratulated Munro on his grand success, and wrote to him that he regarded the victory of the Major

as his own. He sent some presents to Munro and deputed Suchit Ram⁵⁷ for further talks with him. Munro rightly realised that the presence of the Delhi Emperor in the British camp would add a stamp of legality to the actions of the Company and furnish a cause of action against Shuja-ud-daula. "Finding so fair a pretence for advancing their own affairs", Munro "doubled the pace and joined him in a few hours".⁵⁸

The army crossed the Karmanassa on the 30th October, 1764, and reached Benares on November 7, 1764.⁵⁹ Munro sent safeguards to the citizens of Benares and issued strict orders against pillaging or plundering the inhabitants, some of whom had left the place overcome with fear, though most of them remained there in the hope of being protected.⁶⁰ The merchants of the city promised to pay four lacs of rupees for their protection.⁶¹

After the decisive victory in the battle of Buxar, the Fort William authorities determined to keep possession of the country as far as Benares and to apply its revenues to the Company's benefit. This decision was rather to proclaim British victory in the war which Shuja-ud-daula had waged "unjustly" than to augment their revenue. The Fort William authorities, accordingly, intimated to the Court of Directors on November 26, 1764, "We do not wish to extend our connection beyond what may appear necessary for securing the future tranquillity of these provinces which is the first object of our consideration".⁶²

The authorities at Fort William on November 6, 1764, instructed Munro to demand in his future talks with the *nawab-wazir* the cession of that part of his territory lying "on the North of the Ganges, the city of Benares and on the South side, the Fort of Chunargurh, nearly opposite to the same city." They also directed Munro, "With respect to Bulwand Sing, the Rajah of Benares and Zamindar of the Gauzeepoor Country, the double part he acted in the beginning of the war sufficiently warns us to put no confidence in him and therefore, if he has not already been permitted to join you or you have entered into no engagements with him, we would have him dispossessed of his country and his person, if possible secured".⁶³ The Council also entrusted Munro with the responsibility for the collection of revenue after the expulsion

of Balwant Singh. On November 6, 1764, Dacres and Billers of the Patna Council were directed to proceed to Benares as soon as possible to relieve Munro of the responsibility of collecting revenue, with instructions to take every possible step to conciliate the people and win their sympathy and affection for the British cause through the avoidance of all manner of force or coercion.⁶⁴

On November 26, 1764, the Bengal Government established a factory at Benares and appointed Randolph Marriott its Chief. Billers and Dacres were directed to hand over the charge to Marriott and return to Patna.⁶⁵ The members of this factory were required to take possession and make settlement of the country of Shuja-ud-daula, which might fall in the hands of the Company. But the Chief was specifically instructed to accept any other arrangement which Munro might have made.⁶⁶

While the Bengal Government was thus enunciating their policy of destroying Balwant Singh and assuming the management of his *zamindari*, events were moving with kaleidoscopic swiftness at this end of the country. Balwant Singh retreated from Amla to Ramnagar, on the 24th October, and on the arrival of Munro together with Shah Alam II on November 7, 1764, at Benares, he fled to his fortress at Latifpore.⁶⁷ From this secluded station, he won over Raja Khayali Ram,⁶⁸ Nurul Hasan Khan⁶⁹ and Raja Shitab Ray⁷⁰ to his side. Khayali Ram wrote to Shitab Ray, the Deputy Governor of Bihar, in early November, that Balwant Singh did not participate in the battle of Buxar and thus fulfilled his contract with the English.⁷¹ At the same time, Balwant Singh also approached the authorities of Fort William. He sent a congratulatory *nazr* of 11 gold *mohurs* to Vansittart and wrote to him in early November, 1764, professing loyalty and signifying his willingness to accept any arrangement that might be suggested by Shitab Ray.⁷²

Balwant Singh also tried to win Munro over. He paid a *nazr* of 11 gold *mohurs* to him, congratulated him on his grand success and reminded him of his own "performance of the duties of obedience".⁷³ He had written to Munro, even before his arrival at Benares,⁷⁴ enquiring, if the English chose to keep themselves in possession of the *wazir's* country, the *sarkars* of Benares, Ghazipore, Jaunpore and Bijaygarh along with the management of Azamgarh

might be leased out to him.⁷⁵ Shitab Ray communicated to Munro on November 16, 1764, that he had received a letter from Balwant Singh, in which he had expressed his desire to hold the *zamindari* of Benares from the Company on those terms on which he had been holding it so long; these districts yielded a revenue of 24 lacs of rupees a year approximately and he was willing to pay one lac and seventy thousand per month. Balwant Singh also desired that the districts of Azamgarh and Kunda, which were adjacent to Benares, might conveniently be handed over to him, if the English would march forward to conquer Shuja-ud-daula's dominions.⁷⁶ Shitab Ray recommended the case of Balwant Singh in these strong words: "The Raja is a man who adheres to his engagements and pays his rent regularly. If it is your pleasure to take the country, let the management of the aforesaid territories be committed to his charge and in case of accommodation with Shujah Dowlah, you let a favourable answer be written to the Rajah to let his mind at ease; he is a person of *High Rank* and a *Zamindar of a Frontier Country*".⁷⁷ Shah Alam II also suggested to Munro that, if he could win over Balwant Singh to his cause, it would be easy for him to take possession of Chunargarh and Allahabad and thus to drive away the *wazir* from his country.⁷⁸

The British victory in the battle of Buxar succeeded in piercing the accumulated clouds that had loomed large on the political firmament of Benares and had threatened the existence of the British protectorate over the province of Bengal. But the scattered fragments of clouds of danger yet hovered at the horizon. The fond hopes that Shuja-ud-daula cherished in his breast to conquer the rich and fertile tracts of tempting Bihar were certainly dashed to ground on the plains of Buxar, but his power of causing mischief and embarrassment to the British interests by securing the help of the Maratha leader, Malhar Rao, and of the Afghan princes remained unabated.⁷⁹ The discomfiture in the battle of Buxar must have given a rude shock to the vanity of Shuja-ud-daula who often boasted of having learnt the art of warfare in the camp of Ahmad Shah Durrani.⁸⁰ Shah Alam II who had thrown his weight on the side of the English was not very helpful to their interests, as his expenses too, had to be borne by the Company. The Company's financial position,

resting on the purse of the Nawab of Bengal, was passing through a very critical phase.

In this context Munro did not take the risk of dispossessing Balwant Singh of his territories. He informed the Raja that *sanads* would be granted to him, so that he might hold the territories in question till the conclusion of the war.⁸¹ He wanted to see him, but Balwant Singh, who had been biding his time in the fortress of Latifpore, evaded coming unless Munro sent him the duly signed articles of treaty.⁸²

Munro could not afford to leave this burning question aside for long, because, Shuja-ud-daula had gathered an army of 30,000 troops, including some Pathans, and had turned down the English proposal of surrendering Mir Qasim, Sombre and the deserters with utter contempt.⁸³ Moreover, in the wake of the fateful battle of Buxar, a sense of insecurity and lawlessness increased in the areas adjacent to Benares, and the collection of revenue required a large number of armed forces.⁸⁴ There were very few persons in the country who had any weight or troops at their command.⁸⁵ So, if any person other than Balwant Singh were appointed to collect the revenue or assist the King, it would mean that the Company would be forced to keep the army stationed there.⁸⁶ Munro wrote to the Secret Committee on November 22, 1764, "If I left him without kare (sic) with 15 or 20,000 Horse he has, would prevent our Grain from coming to us and everything else, did (sic) the Army march to Eliabad".⁸⁷

On November 21, 1764, Munro, therefore, agreed to grant the proposals of Balwant Singh⁸⁸ as they had been sent to him by the Raja through Suchit Ram on November 16.⁸⁹ He sent Captain Stables to the Raja on the same day with the duly signed articles of treaty.⁹⁰ The King deputed Muniruddaula, on his behalf, to the Raja to allay his fears.⁹¹ Balwant Singh came to Benares on November 24, 1764. Munro confirmed him in the possession of his territories on the same condition on which he had held them from the *nawab-wazir*.⁹² Thus favoured, Balwant Singh returned to Ramnagar⁹³ with a joyful mind.

Munro thus took a very practical stand towards Balwant Singh by making a settlement with him. He did not want to disturb the

political equilibrium by antagonising the powerful Raja of Benares whose gold and might⁹⁴ could be a source of support for the English Company. While making this settlement, the Major was prompted by no other consideration than plain and simple expediency. He did not willingly agree to the terms but he was forced to do so. His letter to the Secret Committee on November 22, 1764, which was tantamount to a candid confession of his failure to chastise Balwant Singh, runs as follows :

“I shall look upon it as a lucky circumstance, if he keeps his word, for if I was obliged to drive him out of the country, it would take a great deal of time having the Ganges to cross again and I neither could set about for taking Chunargarh or march to Eliabad till that was done”.⁹⁵

This arrangement with Balwant Singh proved beneficial for the English Company. The Raja paid the first instalment of seven lacs of rupees to the King as directed by Munro.⁹⁶ He advised the English to besiege Chunargarh,⁹⁷ a fortress famous for strength, and strategic importance. The operations against Chunargarh started on December 2, 1764, under Captain Pemble, but it had to be raised on December 6, because the Nawab had come within 17 *Koss* of the English army and wanted either to cut off the lines of communication or to carry off the King.⁹⁸

When the Secret Committee was informed of the arrangement made with the Raja of Benares on November 21, 1764, it agreed to adhere to the terms which Munro had thought necessary to make with him.⁹⁹ But it opined on December 6, 1764, “It is our view, so far as could be done consistently with your engagements, to have the power and authority over this Rajah and his Zemindaries vested in the Company by Sunnads from the King holding them under him with same rights and in as full a manner as enjoyed by Shuja Dowla and that the whole rents so collected shall be appropriated for the the use of the Company and wrote off from the Books of the King’s Revenues”.¹⁰⁰

Accordingly, on December 29, 1764, a *farman* was executed by Shah Alam II, by which the country of Ghazipore and the rest of the *zamindari* of Balwant Singh, belonging to the *nizamat* of Shuja-ud-daula, were assigned to the Company. The Raja of Benares,

having settled terms with the Chiefs of the English Company, was to pay the revenue to them.¹⁰¹ Balwant Singh was highly disappointed with the royal *farman*, as "no engagement had been made with him".¹⁰² He had joined the English on the definite understanding that he would be secured in his possessions. But, to his utter dismay, he found that the King had settled those territories with the English instead of with him. So he immediately left the British camp under the pretence of protecting his family at Latifpore from an expected aggression from Shuja-ud-daula.¹⁰³

Marriott came to Benares on January 2, 1765,¹⁰⁴ and found that the arrangement with Balwant Singh had not been working well. After paying the first instalment of seven lacs, the Raja had paid only Rs. 9000 out of the present collections of revenues, and had done nothing else.¹⁰⁵

On January 5, 1765, Carnac informed the Council that he had received intelligence of Balwant Singh having deserted the army.¹⁰⁶ The authorities at Fort William did not consider it seriously, but took it to be "entirely groundless".¹⁰⁷ This expectation about Balwant Singh indicates that the Bengal Government was still living in an ivory tower. The Secret Committee opined on January 21, 1765, though it was true that the Company did not make any formal engagement with Balwant Singh, yet his interests would oblige him to stay in the English camp.¹⁰⁸

Certainly, the instincts of self-interest and self-preservation mainly shaped the policy of Balwant Singh. Every inch a realist, he was fully aware of his own strength and of the stupendous difficulties with which the English Company was beset. The war with Shuja-ud-daula, who still held the strategic forts of Chunar and Allahabad and who had yet ample fighting resources, was in progress; the utility of his alliance with the British was not yet over. Hence, by leaving the British camp, he struck at the opportune moment to squeeze the English.

But Major Flecher completely misunderstood Balwant Singh. He reported to the Secret Council on January 13, 1765, that he placed little confidence in the Raja, who acted more in the interest of Shuja-ud-daula than in that of the King.¹⁰⁹

The apprehensions of Fletcher that Balwant Singh would side

with the Nawab did not come true. The Raja did not commit any act of hostility ; he was at worst a neutral.¹¹⁰ All-out endeavours were being made to prevail on the Raja to return, because his continuance with them was "of consequence".¹¹¹ A section in the English camp believed that Balwant Singh himself would be obliged to remain with the army at Benares, because, he was not safe till Shuja-ud-daula was brought to an action and was defeated.¹¹² It was also expected that a general action against Shuja-ud-daula, "in all probability", would "bring back Balwan Sing".¹¹³

Fletcher captured the fort and city of Jaunpore on January 21, 1765.¹¹⁴ Even after this military success, the predictions of the diplomatic pundits about Balwant Singh did not come true. Shah Alam asked him to come back :¹¹⁵ Fletcher wrote to him to join the Allahabad and Chunargarh expeditions,¹¹⁶ but the sphinx maintained mysterious silence. It was obvious that Balwant Singh would not cast his weight on the side of the English, unless his demand for having the management of the *zamindari* was conceded to him by a definite agreement.¹¹⁷ The zero hour of dashing against Chunargarh and Allahabad was approaching. The soldiers were without pay for the last three months. The military operations were handicapped by acute pecuniary distress.¹¹⁸ In this crisis, Shitab Ray was deputed to Balwant Singh at Latifpore to dispel fears from his mind and to get him back to the British army.¹¹⁹ On February 6, 1765, Shitab Ray succeeded in concluding a fresh agreement with the Raja, confirming him in the government of four *sarkars*,¹²⁰ and this document was duly signed by Fletcher and Marriott, on behalf of, the English Company.¹²¹

The reconciliation with Balwant Singh rendered it unnecessary to keep the army stationed in the parts near Chunargarh, and the military operations against Shuja-ud-daula could be pursued with renewed vigour.¹²² The army was divided into two parts ; one, under Fletcher, was sent towards Allahabad and another, under Stibbert, was directed to besiege the fort of Chunar. Balwant Singh sent his brother with a contingent of troops to aid the English army in the conquest of Allahabad¹²³ fort, and also his brother's son, Samir Singh, with a regiment to assist Stibbert in the siege of Chunar.¹²⁴ The fort of Chunar was occupied by Stibbert on the

morning of the 8th February, 1765.¹²⁵ On the same day in the afternoon, the fort of Allahabad fell to Fletcher.¹²⁶

Balwant Singh also benefited much by the compromise with the English Company. While he was at Latifpore, the lawless *zamindars* of Ghazipore stopped all public roads and hampered the work of collection. The state of the country around Benares was not better. Seditious rabble took possession of important positions in Jaunpore and the general condition of the *zamindari* offered a gloomy prospect.¹²⁷ After the agreement of February 6, 1765, Balwant Singh was free to pay personal attention to the management of the *zamindari*. Moreover, his hands were strengthened by Fletcher who had directed the contingent, posted at Buxar, to go to Ghazipore and assist him in the work of collection.¹²⁸

Gradually, the details of settlement with Balwant Singh were chalked out. It was decided that the King would not interfere in any way with the work of collection.¹²⁹ Marriott was appointed *sazawal* on behalf of the English Company to ensure regular payment of the revenue.¹³⁰ Marriott fixed the revenues of the four *sarkars* at Rs. 20,86,607 and after deducting the sums for *pymally* and *nankars*, the net sum amounted to Rs. 18,70,807 *hushyn* Rupees and after reducing the sundries, the revenue of Balwant Singh was fixed at Rs. 16,42,500 as. 6,¹³¹ for that year. This fixation was provisional and was subject to alternation by the authorities at Fort William.¹³² Marriott fixed the monthly instalment of revenue at Rs. 1,36,875 as. 10. This sum was to be charged from the month of *Kartick* of the *Fasli* year 1172. Balwant Singh was entrusted in a formal way with the maintenance of law and order of four *sarkars* including the fort of Chunar. He was also to shoulder the duties of both *amin* and *faujdar* of those places.¹³³ Balwant Singh made four prayers to the English masters ; first, he wished not to be interfered with or disturbed by anybody in the discharge of his assigned duties ; second, he wanted to be entrusted with the management of Seringah, without the possession of which, the revenues of Ghazipore district could not be collected ; third, he required a battalion with guns to be granted to him for the smooth collection of revenues, and lastly, he wished that no more revenue demand should be on him made save and except the stipulated sum.¹³⁴

The agreement with Balwant Singh, as concluded on February 6, 1765, was not to the liking of the authorities at Fort William who apprehended that, if the English army received any check at any time, the Raja would be the first to break off his engagement with the Company. Moreover, his territory, commanding a central position between the English provinces and the operating English forces, would encourage him to create much mischief with his vast army.¹³⁵ It was written to Carnac on April 1, 1765, "As it appears that Bulwand Sing has again been received back on the faith of the promises made by them, that we shall abide by them, tho 'we wish none had been made till our sentiments had been known'".¹³⁶ Carnac was, however, advised to keep an eye on his conduct and correspondence and not to allow him to maintain such a body of force as might on any occasion prove prejudicial to the British interests.¹³⁷

Thus the policy of the supreme authority at Fort William was not to trust Balwant Singh whose mysterious conduct had indicated that he was a broken reed to rely upon at the hour of crisis and was capable of doing anything which might cater to his selfish interest ; yet, it is one of the grim ironies of history that the English Company had to depend on that undependable man. The English Commanders, in spite of his oscillating tendencies, had to confirm him in his rank of the *zamindar* of Benares with special privileges and the masters at Fort William were forced to agree to accept all his proposals and to give up Rs. 2,28,306 as. 10, "in the hopes of making it in his interest to remain faithful by the advantages" he would "reap from his connection with" them.¹³⁸ The search for security of their frontiers obliged the Fort William authorities to keep the resourceful Raja of Benares in good humour, as it was written to Carnac on the 1st April, 1765, "The Security we look for from Extending our Frontiers being a greater object than any increase of our Revenues".¹³⁹

The news of the sudden flight of Beni Bahadur on April 3, 1765, renewed the apprehensions of the Fort William authorities about Balwant Singh. It was suspected that he might raise the standard of rebellion at any odd moment. Carnac was asked on his part to keep "the strictest eye" upon him and to "take every possible means for their security in respect to him".¹⁴⁰

But Balwant Singh did not prove to be as faithless as the English authorities at Fort William suspected him to be. He began to make regular payment of the *kists* to the English Company in conformity with his agreement.¹⁴¹

Without any opposition from the powerful Raja of Benares and without any financial embarrassment, (since the revenue paid by Balwant Singh helped the English Company to meet the expenses of the army), the war against Shuja-ud-daula was carried on to a happy end. The desperate attempt of the *nawab-wazir* to regain his lost prestige with the help of the Marathas was foiled in the battle of Kora (May 3, 1765). The flickering ray of his hope to defeat the English vanished for ever. He visited Carnac on May 26, 1765, at Jajmow near Allahabad. Carnac reported to the Select Committee on the same day, "We can make a friend of Shuja-Dowla which really I believe, we may, provided we use with moderation our success".¹⁴² He had a long talk with Shuja-ud-daula in another meeting and reported to the Select Committee on June 7, 1765, "The Zemindary of Benares and Ghazipore is too great a distance to be worth our keeping, this may also hereafter be conceded to him in consideration of a sum of money in exchange for the same".¹⁴³

On April 26, 1765, the Court of Directors expressed their anxiety for the continued war with Shuja-ud-daula and wrote to Clive, on whose great abilities and zeal for the Company's services they had fullest confidence, "we hope your Lordship's arrival will have a happy influence on our affairs by hastening the conclusion of that expensive war".¹⁴⁴

On June 11, 1765, the authorities at Fort William agreed with Carnac on the necessity of showing moderation in terms of the treaty to be concluded with Shuja-ud-daula who was to be fastened to the English interests "by ties of Gratitude and not by Compulsions".¹⁴⁵ But they did not accept the contention of the General for unconditionally handing over the *zamindari* of Balwant Singh to Shuja-ud-daula and instructed him in specific terms that the Raja of Benares should be "pardoned and secured in the possession of his country on the same terms as when he was under the Government of Shuja Dowlah".¹⁴⁶ The Select Committee reiterated its policy towards the province of Benares on June 21, 1765, in its instructions to Clive

in which, while asking him to conciliate the *nawab-wazir*, positively advised him to secure Balwant Singh in the possession of the *zamin-dari* of Benares.¹⁴⁷

The treaty of Allahabad was finally signed on the 16th August, 1765. The English restored to Shuja-ud-daula all his dominions with the exception of Chunar (which was retained by the English) and the districts of Kora and Allahabad (which were given to Emperor Shah Alam II). The *nawab-wazir* also agreed to pay fifty lacs of rupees to the Company to cover the expenses of the "unjust war". By the fifth clause of the treaty, Shuja-ud-daula engaged in a most solemn manner to continue Balwant Singh in the *zamindari* of Benares, Ghazipore and all other districts he possessed at the time he came over to the side of Jafar Ali Khan and the English, on condition of his paying "the same revenue as before".¹⁴⁸

When the treaty of Allahabad was being discussed and the fate of Balwant Singh was hanging in balance, he fled from Ramnagar to Latifpore and from there, deputed his *wakils* to effect a reconciliation.¹⁴⁹ After the conclusion of the treaty, Shuja-ud-daula gave a *tankhwah* on Balwant Singh for twenty lacs of rupees in order to defray the indemnity of fifty lacs.¹⁵⁰ The *wakil* of the Raja reluctantly accepted the obligation.¹⁵¹

The treaty of Allahabad meant only a change of master to Balwant Singh who along with rights and obligations was transferred from the English to the Nawab of Awadh. It was, however, decided that the present arrangement would continue at least up to the 27th November, 1765, and that thereafter Shuja-ud-daula would get back the sovereignty of the province of Benares.¹⁵²

The authorities in England approved of the political system of Clive in their letters of the 24th December, 1765¹⁵³, and the 19th February, 1766.¹⁵⁴ As to the fifth clause of the treaty of Allahabad, they commented on May 17, 1766, "Bulwund Sing's joining us at a time he did, was of signal service and the stipulation in his favour was, what he was justly entitled to".¹⁵⁵

It is open to question whether the Company's policy adopted towards Balwant Singh was "repayment of a debt of gratitude since he had finally cast in his lot with the English".¹⁵⁶ This contention cannot be accepted. The authorities at Fort William resolved on

November 6, 1764, to dispossess Balwant Singh of his country and to secure his person, if possible ; but Munro was forced by circumstances to make a settlement with him on November 21, 1764. When the English Company entered into an agreement with the King on December 29, 1764, without assigning a definite status to Balwant Singh, he left the British camp and the English Company had to woo him by sending Shitab Ray and had to swallow his terms by assigning to him the management of the province of Benares. Hence, it is not correct to say that Balwant Singh had cast in his lot with the English Company. As a matter of fact, he dictated his own terms to the Company and the latter was forced to accept them for its own critical position. It may be argued, if such was the case why the Company did not agree to the proposal of Shuja-ud-daula for ruining the Raja of Benares and why the Select Committee was then so insistent in maintaining Balwant Singh. The answer to these pertinent questions lies in the facts that the *nawab-wazir* had given the Company much trouble and anxiety by waging ceaseless wars and that the record of a bloody war cannot be effaced by writing only on a piece of paper. The alliance with Shuja-ud-daula was yet to be put to the acid test of time. Hence, the imperative need of the hour was to have a buffer-state within the buffer-state of Awadh and to set the Raja of Benares to keep watch over the newly acquired friend. As Shitab Ray wrote to Cartier, "The sole object of Lord Clive in concluding the Treaty which he did between the Vezier and Balwant was to place his zamindari under the Company's protection in order that since the boundaries of Behar and Benares are contiguous, it may prove serviceable to the English in times of need".¹⁵⁷ Clive's settlement, regarding Benares in 1765, was not magnanimous, but it was certainly sagacious and judicious. "It was indisputably to the advantage of the Company to recognize and protect a friendly Hindu neighbour whose power might serve as a check upon the Muslim ruler of Oudh".¹⁵⁸

In the months immediately preceding the treaty of Allahabad, Marriott set himself to redress the grievances of the Muslim landholders who had been granted extensive tracts of rent-free land under Royal grant, but who had been compelled by Balwant Singh to pay for their land like ordinary landholders and had, in many

cases, been dispossessed of their landed property by him.¹⁵⁹ There were also numerous religious and charitable pensioners who were paid partly in cash and partly in assignments. They were all deprived of their pension by Balwant Singh.¹⁶⁰

Marriott investigated in July, 1765, the claims of all these classes of recipients of Royal bounty : he renewed their grants and prepared a register of admitted claims. Three hundred and twenty-three individuals or families were registered as annual recipients, and Marriott made Balwant Singh pay Rs. 91,002-14 as. per annum to them.¹⁶¹

Marriott obtained by earnest solicitation from Emperor Shah Alam the office of the Mint-master and shared its profits with him. The Fort William authorities came to know of this clandestine deal when Marriott had involved himself in a quarrel with Bolts, the second in the Benares factory. In early August, 1765, he lodged a complaint with the Select Committee that Bolts had confined a merchant of the city, named Sadalloo, in his house for two days. While replying to the charge on August 12, 1765, Bolts "set forth many circumstances in complaint" against his chief, particularly for renting the Mint and exercising the offices of *amanī*, *faujdari* and *lotwali*, contrary to the orders of the Calcutta authorities.¹⁶²

In order that their reciprocal complaints might be thoroughly investigated, the Select Committee, on the 16th August, ordered those two gentlemen to Calcutta with their respective evidences, leaving Issac Sage, an official of the Benares factory, in charge of it.¹⁶³

Shuja-ud-daula, too, complained to the Bengal Government that Marriott, actuated by the selfish motive of forcing the *nawab-wazir* to put him in possession of the Mint, had been creating considerable disturbances in it and behaving, as if he himself was the supreme authority and the Nawab, nobody.¹⁶⁴ On September 28, 1765, the *nawab-wazir* added that the business of his government met with great interruption from the gentlemen of the English factory.¹⁶⁵

Being highly exasperated by these reports, the Calcutta authorities wrote to the Chief of the Benares factory, on October 29, 1765, "It is our positive order that he will not interfere directly or indirectly with the affairs of the Government, but confine himself strictly to the Collection of *tankhwah* money for which purpose solely

his residence is continued at Benares".¹⁶⁶ On November 11, 1765, Marriott branded the allegations of the Nawab as "groundless", because, the latter could not furnish particulars to substantiate his case. He, however, promised to take all possible care so that Shuja-ud-daula might not have any ground for allegations in future.¹⁶⁷

It is amusing to note that Balwant Singh, who had reasons to be annoyed with Marriott, described the latter as a popular figure on account of his strict administration of justice and earnestly pleaded for his further stay at Benares.¹⁶⁸

The Fort William authorities could not, however, oblige the Raja and enquired into the conduct of both Marriott and Bolts. The Board found that Marriott's role was reproachable on two counts. First, he had accepted an appointment under the King against the positive orders of the authorities which had prohibited a servant of the Company from holding any employment under "the country government". Secondly, as per *sanad* the Mint being granted to the English company, its profits should have been deposited in the English treasury and not with the King. In view of the past good services of Marriott, the Bengal Government took a lenient view and asked him to repay the amount.¹⁶⁹ As to Bolts, he was censured because he had defied his chief and had complained to the Calcutta authorities, against him, motivated by the selfish desire of sharing the advantages of the Mint.¹⁷⁰ On February 4, 1766, it was resolved that these two gentlemen should be kept in the Presidency and that Sage, be formally appointed the Resident at Benares, until the whole of the *tankhwah* money, on account of the treaty with Shuja-ud-dula, was discharged.¹⁷¹

Balwant Singh applied to the Bengal Government, through the Chief of the English factory, for getting the possession of the fort of Chunar. But the proposal, being repugnant to the treaty of Allahabad, was turned down. The Bengal Government, however, assured him that they would pay an equal regard to their engagement with him and support him on every just occasion.¹⁷²

Shuja-ud-daula discharged the entire sum stipulated in the treaty of Allahabad by May, 1766, and orders were issued on June 11, 1766, to Col. Smith to return to the province of Bihar and

to Issac Sage to put the Nawab in possession of the country of Benares. On July 1, 1766, Sage formally installed Shuja-ud-daula in the Province of Benares. The fort of Chunar was handed over to Shuja-nd-daula with this proviso that the English soldiers would remain there until the second brigade was withdrawn from Allaha-bad. The East India Company maintained there one battalion of troops for the defence of the city and protection of the King.¹⁷³

Shuja-ud-daula could not whole-heartedly accept the special security guaranteed to the Raja of Benares by the English Company. In the Chapra conference, held in the second week of June, 1766,¹⁷⁴ he expressed his resentment and annoyance with Balwant Singh to Clive and sought his permission to get rid of him. Clive asked Shuja-ud-daula to forgive him.¹⁷⁵ The Nawab then demanded an increase of ten lacs of rupees on the annual revenue¹⁷⁶ and thirty lacs of rupees as *pesh-kash*.¹⁷⁷ Balwant Singh, who was then attending on Carnac and other English officers, induced them to use their influence with Clive, on his behalf.¹⁷⁸

With the interference of Clive, a compromise was, however, patched up. It was decided that there should be no increase in the annual revenue payable by the Raja, that is, Balwant Singh would pay the annual revenue of Rs. 20,86,207 as had been fixed by Marriott after his agreement with the English on February 6, 1765.¹⁷⁹ As to deductions on account of *nankars* etc., Balwant Singh would be entitled to a remission of Rs. 88,158 only, but he should regularly pay the net amount of Rs. 19,98,440 to the Nawab as his annual revenue.¹⁸⁰ Clive permitted the Nawab to take three lacs of rupees as *pesh-kash*.¹⁸¹ Shuja-ud-daula forgave the Raja's past errors and agreed to leave him in peace and tranquillity, at the same time promising in most solemn manner not to use any fraud or artifice against him.¹⁸² A covenant, embodying the settlement between the Raja and the Nawab, was drawn up, signed, and sealed. Clive, Carnac and other English officers affixed their signatures as witnesses to the deed and pledged that any breach of these articles would be deemed as a breach of faith between the parties and the English.¹⁸³ The document, thus drawn up, was handed over to Balwant Singh and a *khelat* was also presented to him.¹⁸⁴

Notwithstanding the best efforts of Clive, the differences between

Shuja-ud-daula and Raja Balwant Singh could not be bridged over. The Nawab was bent upon curbing the power of the Raja who was his vassal in affluent circumstances. So long as the frontiers of the Nawab's domain were ill secured, the revenues, accruing therefrom, were appropriated by the Raja ; but after the treaty of Allahabad, which provided for the security and organisation of the Nawab's kingdom, he set himself to challenge his contumacious vassal in the Raja with the help of the English Company. Unfortunately for him, the Raja was then under the protective wings of the English Company.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, in the prevailing circumstances, the continuity of its alliance with the Raja was indispensable.

Towards the middle of 1767, there was a widespread rumour in Allahabad and Delhi that Nawab Shuja-ud-daula was about to wage a war on the English. Richard Smith wrote three letters to the Bengal Government in October, 1767, drawing their attention to the fact that the Nawab had been developing the military strength of his kingdom and carrying on regular correspondence with the Marathas.¹⁸⁶ It was also brought to the notice of the Fort William authorities that the *wazir* had made a demand on Balwant Singh for two month's advance and for "one thousand stand of European arms".¹⁸⁷ The Select Committee on November 3, 1767, opined that there was no immediate danger from the Nawab of Awadh but his conduct deserved a close watch.¹⁸⁸ On December 16, 1767, the Bengal Government informed the Court of Directors "Altho' we are induced to treat Shujah-Doula with great Delicacy and carefully to conceal every suspicion of Fidelity, we think it requisite to observe his conduct with circumspection and check in the beginning those symptoms of Ambition that may in Time become dangerous".¹⁸⁹

These developments played into the hands of Balwant Singh¹⁹⁰ who rightly realised that his survival lay in the steadfast friendship with the English¹⁹¹ and also to a great extent, in the successful exploitation of the points of difference between the Nawab and the Company.

Balwant Singh paid a visit to Smith in January, 1768, and narrated at length the evil intentions of Shuja-ud-daula in strengthening the military might of his government. He made it clear to Smith that he had no confidence in the Nawab, but was not afraid of him and

was able to defend himself against his designs. He instigated Smith by saying that he could not find any reason for the rearming of the Nawab. The country of Shuja-ud-daula was in perfect tranquillity ; his lands were cultivated better than ever and the revenues he drew from them far exceeded whatever had been collected in the past ; through friendship with the English, all was peaceful. His neighbours were afraid of him because of his treaty with the English. By drawing a rosy picture of the state of affairs of the Nawab, Balwant Singh shrewdly indicated, he had been preparing for a trial of strength with the English.¹⁹²

On February 17, 1768, Robert Barker, the Commander-in-chief, reported to the Select Committee that Shuja-ud-daula had been paying "indefatigable attention" to his military department and had made remarkable progress in arms and ammunitions which suggested that he had an inclination "to try the strength and courage of his newly disciplined army with the English".¹⁹³ And, in the execution of this plan, Shuja-ud-daula had been laying accusation against those persons who would "remain staunch on the English side" in case of an outbreak of hostilities with the Company, and he considered the Raja of Benares one such person and it was, therefore, "a part of his design to reduce these people, if he could".¹⁹⁴ Thus, Barker was playing the game of Balwant Singh.¹⁹⁵

On August 3, 1768, the Bengal Government became convinced of the absolute necessity of "keeping a vigilant eye over Sujah Dowla's conduct" and also of thwarting his plans.¹⁹⁶ On the same day, Russell, Cartier, and Smith were deputed to that part of the country to take measures, as "the exigency of the affairs" might require.¹⁹⁷

On September 1, 1768, the authorities in Calcutta received a complaint from Shuja-ud-daula, stating that Balwant Singh had not paid the increase of three lacs of rupees as settled in the Chapra Congress. He had paid it only for one year. The Nawab desired, either he should be permitted to enjoy what was his own or the English should appropriate it. Balwant Singh's country was well-cultivated and produced a large revenue ; he was able to bear this demand of three lacs¹⁹⁸ of rupees. The Nawab requested the English authorities to send necessary orders to the Raja.

The Bengal Government hoped that the *pesh-kash* of three lacs of rupees, as promised by Balwant Singh in the Chapra conference, must have been paid to the Nawab by this time ; if not, he must pay it.¹⁹⁹ But, it was specifically held on October 23, 1768, that "should this be a new Demand, we should not approve of it, as it is directly contrary to the Tenor of the Treaty, where it is particularly provided that no Increase whatever should be demanded by the Nawab on the Rent of Bulwand Sing's country".²⁰⁰

When Cartier, Russell and Smith reached Benares in the middle of November, 1768, Shuja-ud-daula came over there to meet them.²⁰¹ He deputed trustworthy agents to utilise this occasion to ventilate his grievances against Balwant Singh. Parsudh Roy reported to the members of the deputation that the Raja derived an income of sixty lacs from the four *sarkars* and, on account of English support, behaved with great contumacy to the Nawab.²⁰² The *nawb-wazir* was prepared to pay ten lacs of rupees to Cartier, if he would permit him to settle matters with Balwant Singh. On this, Cartier began to give the cold shoulder to the Raja.²⁰³

The Nawab hatched a plot. He told the *darogha* of the Artillery that Balwant Singh, depending on the presence of the English troops, came daily without suspicion to the darbar ; that when at usual time, the Raja would come next to pay his respects, the *chobdars* would refuse admittance to any of his followers and would take from him his daggers and bring him unarmed into the presence of the Nawab. At usual hour, next day, the Raja came to attend the darbar, but he scented some foul play and instructed his followers that, if the *chobdars* acted in unusual manner, they should clamour for arrears of pay and seize him. When the *chobdar* asked Balwant Singh to deliver his dagger, the men of the Raja acted as they had been instructed before. In the great tumult, Balwant Singh escaped and went straight to the presence of Cartier. The Nawab, enraged at the escape of his victim, mounted his elephant and pursued him, but he could not overtake him until they both, almost at the same time, arrived at Cartier's tent.²⁰⁴ Cartier told Shuja-ud-daula that he could not do anything in this matter, because of the treaty of Clive and definite instructions of the Government.²⁰⁵

After protracted bargaining, Balwant Singh paid ten lacs of rupees to the Nawab as advance and this sum was to be deducted from the instalments of his yearly revenue.²⁰⁶ This episode made him so disgusted with the Nawab that he left Benares without taking formal leave from the *wazir*.²⁰⁷

The members of the diplomatic mission²⁰⁸ sent their report on Benares, on January 7, 1769. Though the *zamindari* of Balwant Singh was properly included in the territories of Shuja-ud-daula, it could by no means be called or considered, even on supposition of rupture with him, "as part of enemy's country."²⁰⁹ They observed, "Balwant Singh is our friend from the strongest tie which can bind a man—the tie of his own preservation, for it is we believe, universally allowed (sic) that Shuja Dowla has from the date of Rajah's connection with the English not only withdrawn all favours from him ; but he is so implacable in his resentment that we have reason to imagine, Nabob would not scruple pursuing to the last extremity were it not solely for our moderation".²¹⁰

Shuja-ud-daula was, however, never lagging behind in his pretensions to exact money from the opulent Raja of Benares. He publicly complained of Balwant Singh's withholding what he termed "the kists of lunar"²¹¹ month and urged the members of the commission to examine his case "with strict eye to justice".²¹² After scrutinising the records, the Commission on January 12, 1769, held "As Bulwand Sing has not only produced his Excellency's general Receipt and acquittance from all demands of the last year, but also a receipt of the first kist of the present and as this kist for the Lunar month has never been paid or demanded before, we are inclined to think that his Excellency's claim is without foundation".²¹³

The claim of Shuja-ud-daula was baseless because the yearly sum to be paid by Balwant Singh was fixed according to *Fasli* year, so the question of addition of one month did not arise. The Bengal Government naturally found no logic in Shuja-ud-daula's demand and on February 2, 1769, it was rejected outright.²¹⁴

But, Shuja-ud-daula continued his game of teasing Balwant Singh. In the later part of the year of 1769, he sent Ashraff Ali Khan with 200 *sepoys* to quarter at Benares. They oppressed the people in various ways.²¹⁵ Balwant Singh brought this to the notice

of the Bengal Government, which on March 28, 1770, asked the *nawab-wazir* to dismiss Ashraff Ali Khan and to stop any oppression on the people of Benares.²¹⁶

Balwant Singh, though very consistent in his friendship with the English, was not unmindful to preserve his status; in other words, he always maintained his individuality and never became subservient to the Company. Verelst, the Governor, refused to accept gifts or letters from the hands of Mirza Abdulla Beg,²¹⁷ the *wakil* of Balwant Singh, and branded him an undesirable person. But the Raja did not recall the *wakil* instantly, and wrote to Cartier to prevail upon the Governor to accept the presents and also wanted to hear from Cartier about the conduct of the said official.²¹⁸

In July 1769, it was written to Balwant Singh that while a sum of money was being carried from Azimabad to Allahabad, it was looted on the way, near the border of Benares; and as a result of this daring decoity, Rs. 18,000 was lost; as the Raja's territory was contiguous to Bihar, it was probable that his subjects had a hand in it; Balwant Singh was asked to impose a fine of Rs. 9000 on the subjects living near the boundary of his *zamindari*.²¹⁹ But he did not accept the proposal, as the dacoity was committed in a place between Sasaram and the river Sone and as none of his subjects took part in it. He held, "Had any of my subjects taken part in the dacoity, I would have punished them severely; but since they are not guilty of the crime, I cannot do anything to them".²²⁰

But friendly relations, without verging on servility, continued. On February 16, 1770, the Bengal Government asked Balwant Singh to pay two lacs of rupees to Colonel Galliez at Allahabad and to take from the said Colonel a bill of exchange on the Patna factory.²²¹ The Raja readily complied with the request. At the time of crisis of 1770, when famine ravaged the fair province of Bengal, Balwant Singh assisted the English in every possible way, whereas all solicitations for help from Shuja-ud-daula fell on a deaf ear.²²²

Towards the close of his rule, Balwant Singh secured a high place in the estimation of the Fort William authorities and his

alliance with the Company was termed as "one in a thousand". In February 1770, Cartier authorised Balwant Singh to correspond directly with him and to give information on the political state of affairs in North India, particularly of the Sikhs, the Marathas and of Mir Qasim. He was reckoned as a support to the security system of the Company's provinces in eastern India and asked to attend to the securities of his territories by augmenting his troops and collecting war materials.²²³ Balwant Singh immediately sent a report on the movements of different powers and chiefs of northern India and assured Cartier that he would oppose the passage of any invader into Bengal with 3000 horse and 1000 foot, which might be increased in case of necessity by those who had been engaged at that time in police work.²²⁴

Thus, Balwant Singh, by dint of his superior act, *diplomacy and strength* came to enjoy the status of an esteemed ally and not that of a servile subordinate to the East India Company and stood as a bulwark of the Bengal Presidency against possible inroads from the western and central India.

Notes

1. C.P.C., I, Letter Nos. 1927, 1962. *Siyar*, II, p. 513. For alliance between Shuja and Mir Qasim, see A.L. Srivastava—*Shujaudaula I*, Chap. VII.
2. *Siyar*, II., p. 514, *T.T.*, p. 51.
3. *Siyar*, p. 518.
4. *T.T.*, p. 51. Balwant Singh maintained regular licensed thieves in the city of Benares who paid a certain percentage of their booty to him (C.P.C., III, Letter No. 299). The Raja had a band of thieves on the road between Patna and Allahabad (*T.T.*, p. 119).
5. *Ibid.*
6. F.S.C., 2 Feb. 1764, Jennings to Vansittart, 27 Jan. 1764.
7. F.S.C., 12 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 20 Feb. 1764.
8. *Siyar*, II, p. 491.
9. F.S.C., 12 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 20 Feb. 1764.
10. F.S.C., 23 Feb. 1764, Jennings to Board 12 Feb. 1764, C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2093 ; *Siyar*, II, p. 524. In *Siyar* the number is given as 100.
11. F.S.C., 1 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 18 Feb. 1764.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, Board to Balwant Singh, 1 Mar. 1764.
14. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2093.
15. Madec, —*La Nabab Rene Madec*, pp. 30-31, F.S.C., 8 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 24 Feb. 1764.

16. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 105, Oldham: "His character was of the Mahratta type,.....treacherous, unscrupulous, skilled in allaying the suspicions of others, his own cautious vigilance never slept. Brave and willing to fight when fighting was politic, he preferred to use gold rather than steel and rarely attempted an enterprise in which success was doubtful." *Siyar*, II, p. 525. "This Prince who was exceedingly shrewd and withal so wealthy that his riches were reckoned by corors, bore a great character amongst the Gentoos for prowess but was so wary and shy.....".

17. F.S.C., 12 Mar. 1764, Board to Carnac, 12 Mar. 1764.
18. F.S.C., 12 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 20 Feb. 1764.
19. F.S.C., 29 Mar. 1764, Carnac to Board, 18 Mar. 1764.
20. Ibid.
21. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 22 Mar. 1764. Also F.S.C., 12 Mar. 1764, Jennings to Board, 20 Feb. 1764.
22. F.S.C., 29 Mar. 1764, Carnac to Board, 18 Mar. 1764.
23. F.S.C., II Oct. 1764, Mir Ashraff to Vansittart, 7 Aug. 1764.
24. Ibid.
25. F.S.C., 29 Mar. 1764, Carnac to Board, 18 Mar. 1764.
26. Ibid.
27. F.S.C., 29 Mar. 1764, Resolution of the Board, 29 Mar. 1764.
28. Ibid.
29. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2145, *Siyar*, II, p. 524, *Tabsir*, p. 630, *T.T.*, p. 51.
30. F.S.C., 9 Apr. 1764, Mc Leans to Board, (date not given).
31. *T.T.*, p. 52.
32. *Tabsir*, p. 630, *Siyar*, II, p. 525. *T.T.*, p. 52.
33. *Siyar*, II, p. 525. *Tabsir*, pp. 630-631.
34. *T.T.*, pp. 52-53. *Tabsir*, p. 631.
35. *Siyar*, II, pp. 525-526.
36. F.S.C., 26 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 17 Apr. 1764.
37. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 22 Mar. 1764.
38. F.S.C., 16 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 4 Apr. 1764.
39. F.S.C., 26 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 17 Apr. 1764.
40. A.L. Srivastava, *Shujauddaula*, I, p. 172. Here it is suggested that Carnac was "deeply terror-stricken" and that was the cause of his retreat.
41. F.S.C., 16 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 4 Apr. 1764.
F.S.C., 26 Apr. 1764, Carnac to Board, 9 Apr. 1764.
42. *Tabsir*, pp. 630-631. Also *T.T.*, pp. 52-53.
43. *Siyar*, II, p. 528, p. 531 and p. 533. *T.T.*, p. 53. *Tabsir*, pp. 632-635.
C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2232. F.S.C., 14 May 1764, Carnac to Board, 4 May 1764.
To Court (Pub.), 27 Sep. 1764, Para 4.
44. *T.T.*, p. 53. F.S.C., 9 July 1764, Resident at Darbar to Board, 29 June 1764.
45. F.S.C., 10 May 1764, Board to Carnac, 10 May 1764, *Siyar*, II, p. 561.
46. F.S.C., 11 June 1764, Instructions to Carnac, 11 June 1764.
47. F.S.C., 11 June 1764, Carnac to Board, 1 June 1764.
48. F.S.C., 2 July 1764, Carnac to Board, 23 June 1764.
49. Ibid., Also F.S.C., 25 June 1764, Carnac to Board, 16 June 1764.

50. F.S.C., 9 July 1764, Resident of Darbar to Board, 29 June 1764.
51. T.T., p. 53. Trans of P.L.R., 1763-64, No. 269, pp. 532-533. Muhammadabad *pargana* is situated on the other side of the Ganga, just opposite to Buxar.
52. F.S.C., 11 Oct. 1764, Mir Ashraff to Vansittart, 7 Aug. 1764.
53. Ibid.
54. F.S.C., 16 Mar. 1765, Vansittart to Board, 26 Feb. 1765. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2616.
55. *Siyar*, II, p. 525; Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, p. 105.
56. *Siyar*, II, p. 571.
57. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2469; *Siyar*, II, p. 571. Suchit Ram was the *wakil* of Raja Shitab Roy at Benares. He met Shah Alam II at Zamania and accompanied him to Benares. Beni-Bahadur also tried to utilise his good offices for negotiating a peace between Shuja-ud-daula and the English Company. (F.S. Procs, V 2 A, pp. 678-681).
58. *Siyar*, II, p. 571.
59. J.B.O.R.S, XII, p. 32.
60. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764; Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
61. Ibid., S.D.P. XXIX No. 86. A contemporary Marathi letter written by a citizen of Benares states 'that merchants and wealthy inhabitants were forced to contribute. There were some instances of looting. Even the Brahmins were not spared.' Forrest, *Life of Clive*, II, p. 268. Verelst to Clive, 19 Dec. 1764.
62. To Court (pub.), 26 Nov. 1764, paras 7 and 8 (I. O. copy).
63. F.S.C., 6 Nov. 1764, Board to Munro, 6 Nov. 1764.
64. F.S.C., 6 Nov. 1764, Orders to Chief of the Council, Patna, 6 Nov. 1764.
65. F.S.C., 26 Nov. 1764. Board to Chief of the Council, Patna, 26 Nov. 1764.
66. Ibid., "That in collecting the Revenues if Major Munro has made any settlement or entered into any engagements with Bulwand Sing, they are to abide thereby, until the receipt of further orders".
67. T.T., p. 53. Amla is a village in the *pargana* of Muhammadabad in the Ghazipore district.
68. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2459. Raja Khayali Ram was Shah Alam's *Vakil*. He was very faithful to the English. See Sel. Com. Procs., Vol. 14, pp. 165-71 and Vol. 15, pp. 288-302, where Col. Smith testifies to his fidelity to the English.
69. *Siyar*, II, p. 577. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2459. Nurul Hasan Khan Bilgrami, the *Sazawal* of Benares, on behalf of Shuja-ud-daula, was on friendly terms with the Raja. According to *Siyar*, II, p. 577. Balwant Singh's conciliation with the English Company was "effected by Shitab Roy's mediation and by Nurul Hasan Khan's management."
70. *Siyar*, II, p. 577. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2477.
71. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2459.
72. Trans. P.L.R. 1763-64, No. 275, pp. 548-549. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2468.
73. Trans. P.L.R. 1763-64, No. 279, pp. 552-553. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2472.
74. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
75. Trans. P.L.R. 1763-64, No. 283, p. 557. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2476.
76. F.S.C., 21 Nov. 1764, Trans of a letter delivered by Shitab Roy, 16 Nov. 1764. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2477.

77. Ibid.
78. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764. Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764, Shah Alam even suggested to Munro if Balwant Singh joined them, the *wazir* would leave the country immediately.
79. *Siyar*, II, pp. 573, 580
80. Ibid., p. 528.
81. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2476A.
82. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764, *T.T.*, p. 53.
83. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
84. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2585.
85. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. F.S.C., 21 Nov. 1764. Proposals of Balwant Singh and answers of Munro.
90. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764. Ensign John Stables had distinguished himself in the battle of Buxar (F.S. Procs, Vol. 2A, p. 657).
91. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
92. *T.T.*, p. 53. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764. F.S.C., 27 Dec. 1764, Billers and Dacres to Board, 8 Dec. 1764.
93. *T.T.*, p. 53.
94. *Siyar*, II, p. 525.
95. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 22 Nov. 1764.
96. F.S.C., 27 Dec. 1764, Billers and Dacres to Board, 8 Dec. 1764. Also F.S.C., 31 Dec. 1764, Billers and Dacres to Board, 23 Dec. 1764.
97. *Siyar*, II, p. 577.
98. F.S.C., 17 Dec. 1764, Munro to Board, 4 Dec. 1764, *Siyar*, I, pp. 577-578, *Tabzir*, pp. 640-643. To court (pub), 3 Jan. 1765, paras 4-5 (I.O. copy).
99. F.S.C., 6 Dec. 1764, Board to Munro, 6 Dec. 1764.
100. Ibid.
101. F.S.C., 17 Jan. 1765, Trans of Farman executed by the King, 29 Dec. 1764.
102. F.S.C., 21 Jan. 1765, Board to Carnac, 21 Jan. 1765.
103. F.S.C., 28 Jan. 1765, Marriott to Board, 12 Jan. 1765.
104. Ibid., Billers and Dacres came to Benares on the 8th Dec. and hearing that Marriott had been posted as the Chief of Benares Factory left on 10th Dec. (F.S.C., 27 Dec. and 31 Dec. 1764).
105. F.S.C., 28 Jan. 1765, Marriott to Board, 12 Jan. 1765.
106. F.S.C., 21 Jan. 1765, Carnac to Board, 5 Jan. 1765.
107. F.S.C., 21 Jan. 1765, Board to Carnac, 21 Jan. 1765.
108. Ibid.
109. F.S.C., 28 Jan. 1765, Fletcher to Board, 13 Jan. 1765.
110. F.S.C., 28 Jan. 1765, Marriott to Board, 12 Jan. 1765.
111. Ibid.
112. Ibid.
113. F.S.C., 28 Jan. 1765, Fletcher to Board, 14 Jan. 1765.
114. F.S.C., 4 Feb. 1765, Fletcher to Board, 23 Jan. 1765. *
115. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2555.

116. Ibid., Letter No. 2573, F.S.C., 4 Feb. 1765, Fletcher to Board, 23 Jan. 1765.
117. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2586.
118. T.T., pp. 53-54.
119. Ibid. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2603.
120. F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765, Carnac to Board 22 Feb. 1765, T.T., p. 54. Balwant is said to have paid a subsidy of 8 lacs to the Company.
121. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2584 and 2584A. To Court (pub) II Mar. 1765. Post script, para I (I.O. copy).
122. To court (Sec) II Mar. 1765, Post script, (I.O. copy). F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765. Carnac to Board 22 Feb. 1765.
123. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2583, Brother's name is not given.
124. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2585.
125. F.S.C., 19 Feb. 1765, Stibbert to Board 8 Feb. 1765.
126. F.S.C., 19 Feb. 1765, Fletcher to Board 8 Feb. 1765.
127. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2585.
128. Ibid., Letter No. 2586.
129. F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765, Carnac to Board 9 Mar. 1765.
130. T.T., p. 55.
131. F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765, Agreement with Balwant Singh.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765, Arcees of Balwant Singh.
135. Sel. Com. I Apr. 1765, Sel. Com. to Carnac and Marriott, 1 Apr. 1765.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. *Siyar*, II, p. 580, "To carry a tight hand over Radja Belvent Sing proved a business of much labour and difficulty". F.S.C., 15 Apr. 1765, Board to Carnac, 15 Apr. 1765.
141. F.S.C., 29 Apr. 1765, Marriott to Board, 27 Mar. 1765.
142. Sel. Com., II June 1765, Carnac to Sel. Com., 26 May, 1765.
143. Sel. Com., 21 June 1765, Carnac to Sel. Com., 7 June 1765.
144. From Court (pub) to Clive. I.O. copy 26 Apr. 1765. The Court of Directors did not approve of the so-called "Treaty of Benares" (29 Dec. 1764) concluded with the King and was extremely critical of holding the Ghazipore country (zamindari of Balwant Singh) and of extending the borders of the Company's dominions at the cost of the Nawab of Awadh—From Court (pub). 24 Dec. 1765, para 5. They apprehended, the absence of the buffer state of Awadh would extend the possessions of the Company adjacent to the dancing ground of wild forces of chaos and confusion and the policy of conquering places in the name of the king was also censured—From Court (pub.), 19 Feb. 1766, paras 22 and 23.
145. Sel. Com., 11 June 1765, Sel. Com. to Carnac, 11 June 1765.
146. Ibid.
147. Sel. Com., 21 June 1765, Sel. Com. to Clive, 21 June 1765.
148. Sel. Com., 7 Sep. 1765, Treaty between Shuja-ud-daula, the Nawab of Bengal and the Company, 16 Aug. 1765.

149. *T. T.*, p. 57 ; Forrest, *Life of Lord Clive*, II, p. 283. Clive wrote to Lady Clive, 24 Aug. 1765, that Carnac took a present of 80,000 rupees from Balwant Singh.

150. Sel. Com. 7 Sep. 1765, Clive to Board, 20 Aug. 1765.

151. *T. T.*, p. 57.

152. Sel. Com. 7 Sep. 1765, Treaty of Allahabad, 16 Aug. 1765.

153. From Court (pub), 24 Dec. 1765, "To demand Ghazipore, a Frontier Province, surrounded by war-like people, we conceive a measure by no means adequate to the end proposed and absolutely a contradiction to our repeated Directions not to extend our possessions".

154. From Court (pub), 19 Feb. 1766, "The dispossessing of Shujah Dowlah is, we apprehend, the breaking down of the strongest Barrier, we could have had against the Afghans, Marathas and all Invader of the Empire who were checked from penetrating into Eastern Provinces by a Power so respectable as his was throughout Hindustan".

155. From Court (Sec), 17 May 1766, para 6.

156. C.C. Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh* p. 7.

157. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 377. We have already discussed how Balwant Singh forced the English Generals to re-instate him as the frontier *zamindar* of Benares. Clive wrote to the Court of Directors "I will, however just remark that our restoring to Snuja Doula the whole of his dominions proceeds more from the policy of not extending the Company's territorial possession than the generous principle of attaching him for ever to our interest by gratitude."—To Court (pub), 30 Sep. 1765, para 8 (I.O. copy).

158. C.C. Davies, *Warren Hastings and Oudh*, p. 7.

159. Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection at Benares*. Appendix p. 39. Khai-ruddin, *Tazkirat-ul-Ulama*, p. 10.

160. Ibid.

161. Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection at Benares*, Appendix p. 40.

162. To Court (pub), 24 Mar. 1766, H.P.C., 28 Nov. 1766 A(1). Marriott did not appropriate the profits himself and paid the same to the King but acceptance of such appointment was repugnant to the orders of the authorities at Fort William. Moreover, those profits belonged to the Company and not to the king. (H.P.C., 28 Nov. 1766, No. A 1-6).

163. To Court (pub), 24 Mar. 1766.

164. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2730.

165. Sel. Com., 29 Oct. 1765, Shuja to Sel. Com., 28 Sep. 1765.

166. Sel. Com., 29 Oct. 1765, Sel. Com. to the Chief of the Factory at Benares., 29 Oct. 1765.

167. Sel. Com., 22 Nov. 1765, Marriott to Sel. Com. 11 Nov. 1765.

168. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2726.

169. To Court (pub), 24 Mar. 1766, C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2733.

170. To Court (pub), 24 Mar. 1766.

171. Ibid.

172. C.P.C., I, Letter No. 2733.

173. Sel. Com., 12 Aug. 1766, Clive to Sel. Com., 14 July 1766.

174. *T. T.*, pp. 58-59, *Siyar*, III, pp. 19-21. In *Siyar* the name of the place is not mentioned. This conference was attended by Clive, Carnac, Shuja, Balwant,

Muniruddaula, the agent of Shah Alam, and the representatives of the Rohillas, the Marathas and the Jats. Sel. Com., 12 Aug. 1766. Clive and Carnac to Sel. Com., 14 July 1766, To Court (Sec), 8 Sep. 1766. A.L. Srivastava. *Shujauddaula*, II pp. 27-32. Before his departure to England Clive met Shuja in order to finish some business "especially that which concerned Radja Belvant Sing".—*Siyar*, III, p. 19.

175. *T.T.*, p. 58. B.M. Add. MSS. No. 29212, Clive is reported to have asked Shuja to wait till the death of Balwant.

176. *T.T.*, p. 58.

177. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 741.

178. *T.T.*, p. 58.

179. Sel. Com., I.O. 23 Nov. 1770, Agreement with Chait Singh, F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765. Marriott conceded Rs. 4,44,107, on account of losses sustained by Balwant in the war with Shuja and for *nankar* etc. This figure of revenue substantially agrees with *Siyar*, III, p. 20, where the revenue is mentioned as twenty lacs and also with *T.T.*, p. 59 where the amount is mentioned as twenty and a quarter lacs. The amount mentioned in the *pottah* of Chait Singh (Sel. Com. I.O., 23 Nov. 1770) has been accepted because that tallies in toto with the revenue mentioned by Marriott in F.S.C., 21 Mar. 1765. Moreover, there is no reason why Clive, the main party to the Treaty of Allahabad, would agree to increase the revenue. It is probable that he had given relief to the Nawab by reducing the remissions.

180. Sel. Com., I.O., 23 Nov. 1770.

181. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 741. Sel. Com., 23 Oct. 1768.

182. *Siyar*, III, p. 20 *T.T.*, p. 59.

183. *Siyar*, III, p. 21.

184. *T. T.*, p. 59.

185. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 741.

186. Sel. Com., 3 Nov. 1767, Smith to Sel. Com., 16 Oct. 1767, 17 Oct. 1767, and 19 Oct. 1767.

187. Sel. Com., 11 Dec. 1767, Intelligence received from Smith.

188. Sel. Com., 3 Nov. 1767, Sel. Com., to Smith, 3 Nov. 1767.

189. To Court (Sec), 16 Dec. 1767.

190. Sel. Com., 3 Aug. 1768, Balwant told Smith "The Nabab does not wish to have me remain (Sic) in this country".

191. Sel. Com., 3 Aug. 1768, Minute of Smith, 3 Aug. 1768.

192. Sel. Com., 3 Aug. 1768.

193. Sel. Com., 2 Mar. 1768, Barker to Sel. Com., 17 Feb. 1768.

194. Ibid.

195. Shuja had no intention to fight the English. A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-uddaula*, II, ch. XII. But it was the policy of Balwant to keep the two apart.

196. Sel. Com., 3 Aug. 1768.

197. Ibid.

198. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1108.

199. Sel. Com., 25 Oct. 1768.

200. Sel. Com., L.I. No. 81, Sel. Com. to Cartier, 23 Oct. 1768. Balwant had already paid three lacs (C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1108) and Shuja had been trying to increase his yearly revenue by three lacs. Hence it was a new demand and did not get the English support (Sel. Com., 25 Oct. 1768).

201. On Nov. 29, 1768, a treaty between the *wazir* and the English was signed. It considerably reduced the power of Shuja. For details See A.L. Srivastava, *Shujauddaula*, II, pp. 79-86.

202. *T.T.*, p. 60.

203. *Ibid.*

204. *Ibid.* This incident is partially corroborated by C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1294 where it is stated that Balwant left Benares without taking leave from the *wazir*. In Sel. Com., 25 Jan. 1769, we find partial corroboration.

205. *T.T.*, pp 60-61. Sel. Com., L.I. No. 81, Sel. Com. to Cartier, 23 Oct. 1768,

206. *T.T.*, p. 61. On this occasion the Raja promised to pay 11 lacs to Cartier and one lac to Munro.

207. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1294.

208. The mission presented Balwant with a *khelat*, a *sarpanch* and elephant. The total cost of these presents was Rs. 4,128-4 as. (Sel. Com., I.O. copy, 1 Mar. 1769).

209. Sel. Com., 25 Jan. 1769, Cartier, Russell and Smith to Sel. Com., 7 Jan. 1769.

210. *Ibid.*

211. The solar year consisted of 365 days and was the standard year of any calculation of revenues among the Hindus. The Muslims, on their part, adopted lunar year consisting of 354 days for such calculations. When the Muslims obtained ascendancy throughout Hindusthan, they introduced their own method of calculation and much confusion followed in the collection of rovenues, in the fashion of the conquerors. The Muslims permitted the Hindus to preserve their own way of reckoning and to make their own year correspond with the solar year added to it at the expiry of three years, an imaginary month. Shuja demanded the *kist* of this imaginary month. (Sel. Com., 2 Feb. 1769, Cartier, Smith and Russell to Sel. Com., 12 Jan. 1769).

212. Sel. Com., 2 Feb. 1769, Cartier, Smith and Russell to Sel. Com., 12 Jan. 1769.

213. *Ibid.*

214. Sel. Com., 2 Feb. 1768.

215. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 121.

216. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 154.

217. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1301, 1395.

218. *Ibid.*

219. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1487.

220. Trans. P.L.R., 1769, No. 72 pp. 70-71, C.P.C., II, Letter No. 1549.

221. Sel. Com., 16 Feb. 1770, Sel. Com to Galliez 16 Feb. 1770, C.P.C., III, Letter No. 255.

222. Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770, Alexander to Sel. Com., 26 Aug. 1770, *Siyar*, III, p. 56.

223. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 97.

224. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 128.

CHAPTER III

ESTABLISHMENT OF BRITISH SUZERAINTY OVER BENARES 1770—1776

After a short and sudden illness,¹ Raja Balwant Singh expired on August 23, 1770.² With his passing away departed all the wisdom and vitality of the *zamindari* of Benares and an era of bitter internal dissension and guilty external ambition opened in its history.

There were three aspirants to the *zamindari* of Benares. One was Mahipnarain, the son of Balwant Singh's daughter by his principal wife, Rani Golab Kaur.³ Though he was then only seven years old,⁴ yet Rani Golab Kaur and orthodox circles in the country strongly pleaded for him on the ground that in the absence of any legitimate male issue, the succession should devolve on the son of the daughter. Gabriel Harper⁵ reported to the Select Committee on October 4, 1770, "The stricter Brahmins will not permit Cheit Sing—the son of a Rajpoot woman, to associate with them ; on the other hand, they cherish the grandson of the deceased Rajah whose mother is the wife of a Brahmin, and large offers have been made to the vizier on behalf of the youth who indeed seems to have the juster title".⁶

The second claimant was Chait Singh, the son of Balwant Singh by a Rajput lady.⁷ In spite of the so-called irregularity of birth,⁸ Chait Singh had the blessings of the late Raja who nominated him his successor in his death-bed.⁹ The officials and favourites of Balwant Singh such as Ausan Singh, Nanda Bhagat, Ghulam Hussain Khan, Balkisan, Bhairam, and others strongly championed the right of Chait Singh to succeed Balwant Singh.¹⁰ The Select Committee resolved on October 19, 1770, "When it is considered that by the Tenets of the Gentoo Laws, the right of Inheritance descends to the male issue to the utter Exclusion of the female line, it is evident, the pretensions of the grandson can only be urged by Brahmins who are over partial to their own Sect".¹¹

The third contestant was Maniyar Singh, the grandson of Daya Ram, the brother of Mansa Ram, whom Balwant Singh treated "as his son".¹² He claimed the *zamindari* on the ground that there being no legitimate son to succeed Balwant Singh, the inheritance should devolve on the adopted son.¹³

The confusing question of succession was worse confounded by the designs of Shuja-ud-daula who regarded the treaty of Allahabad as relating to exclusively Balwant Singh and not as binding after his death.¹⁴ We may not accept the assertion of James Alexander, the Chief of the Controlling Council, Patna, that the Nawab wanted "instantly" to place the province of Benares under "some rapacious favourite", but there is no shadow of doubt that Shuja-ud-daula wished to turn the *zamindari* of Benares "to his own advantage". Harper informed the Select Committee two days after the death of Balwant Singh that "the Vizier seems determined on, not to allow Bulwand Sing's son to hold the same authority as his father did, either in country or forces".¹⁵ But the redeeming feature in the policy of the *wazir* on the succession-question was that he was not prepared to take any step without consulting the English. Harper noted that Shuja-ud-daula was "apprehensive of determining on anything", until he knew the wishes of the authorities at Fort William "regarding this affair".¹⁶

The English authorities and their officials were equally determined to preserve their influence and interest in the province of Benares. They apprehended, if the English did not interfere in the affairs of Benares, some hot favourite of the Nawab would be placed in the *zamindari* of Benares to the detriment of the English commercial interest,¹⁷ and that would nullify the Company's policy which had been pursued towards Benares since the days of Clive.¹⁸ James Alexander wrote to the Select Committee, three days after the death of Balwant Singh, "It is the opinion of the most experienced people here that their prosperity will decline as soon as left to the uncontrolled disposal of Shujah Dowlah".¹⁹ Ever since the treaty of Allahabad, the ruling family of Benares and its officials had stood steadfast in their attachment to the English Company, while Shuja-ud-daula was not so warm in his friendship with the English as he professed to be. During the dreadful Bengal famine of 1770,

Balwant Singh and his officials had been liberally helping the English administration in Bengal, whereas no positive aid had come from the *wazir*.²⁰ And, the men at the helm of affairs under Balwant Singh, with whom the English had been cultivating cordial relations for years together, supported the claim of Chait Singh to the *zamindari* of Benares.²¹ Raja Shitab Roy, the *naib dewan* of the Company in Bihar, also assured the Governor that Chait Singh would follow in the footsteps of his deceased father and would be firm in his loyalty to the Company, which would "prove serviceable to the English in times of need".²² There were, therefore, strong commercial and "political reasons" for supporting the Raja's son "in a measure independent of the Nabob".²³

On August 26, 1770, Shuja-ud-daula despatched his chief minister, Muhammad Elich Khan, with about 800 horse to Benares to "assure the inhabitants that they need not be under apprehension in consequence of the Rajah's death", and also to prevent "the family of Bulwand Sing from desponding too much".²⁴ But, in reality, the *wazir* wanted to ascertain the actual state of affairs prevalent there, and also to prepare the ground for his early visit.²⁵

On the approach of Elich Khan, Chait Singh fled away to Latifpore along with his family²⁶ and, from there, solicited the favour and protection of the English Company.²⁷ On September 9, 1770, the Select Committee opined that the succession to the *zamindari* of Benares should be settled on the family of Balwant Singh, and wrote to the *wazir*, in a guarded language, in favour of the son of the late Raja.²⁸ Chait Singh was also informed, in consideration of the friendship which had subsisted between his father and the English, the Governor had written to the *wazir* sponsoring his case.²⁹

Learning from Harper of the protracted bargaining at Benares,³⁰ the Bengal Government directed him "to exert utmost Endeavours" to prevail on the Nawab to confirm Chait Singh in the *zamindari* of his father. The Select Committee wrote to Harper, on September 25, 1770, "The strong and inviolable attachment which subsisted between the Company and his father makes us most readily interpose our good offices for the son".³¹ The sentiments of the Bengal Government had been already communicated to the Nawab.³²

In this context, Shuja-ud-daula cancelled his programme of personally visiting Benares, and requested Harper, instead, to proceed there. On October 1, 1770, Harper with the 19th battalion went to Benares for settling the affairs of the *zamindari*.³³

On October 8, 1770, Harper's mediation finally settled that Chait Singh would be confirmed in the *zamindari* of his father on payment of seventeen lacs of rupees as *nazrana* and an increase of two and a half lacs of rupees on the annual revenue.³⁴ On October 10, 1770, Chait Singh was fully vested with the government of the districts held by Balwant Singh on condition of payment of Rs. 22,48,449 as annual revenue.³⁵ Harper ordered a salute of fifteen guns by the artillery of the 19th battalion "to make the young man of more consequence in his Government" and to impress "on the people of Hindustan" that it was through the medium of the English Company that he "attained his right to succession".³⁶

Harper claimed that all parties "appeared to be perfectly well-pleased" with the transaction.³⁷ The English authorities at Fort William felt, on October 19, 1770, that it demonstrated to the other powers in Hindustan the readiness of the Nawab of Awadh to attend to the recommendations of the Company.³⁸ Moreover, the presence of the Company's representative, as a witness, excluded the fear of alterations in the settlement made by Shuja-ud-daula, and gave a sense of security to the young Raja.³⁹ The Court of Directors, on August 28, 1771, wrote, "It affords us great satisfaction to find that the succession of the late Bulwand Sing's son to the Zamindary of Benares met with no opposition from the Vezier".⁴⁰

Chait Singh was grateful to the English for his installation.⁴¹ But, as the treaty with the Nawab did not contain the stipulation made with the *wazir* in favour of his father by the English, Chait Singh was uneasy. He wrote to Shaikh Ali Naqi, his *wakil* in Calcutta, to procure a *khelat* and a treaty under "the Governor's seal and Signature".⁴² He also approached the Nawab for clarification of his position under the new treaty. Shuja-ud-daula invited him to come to Fyzabad on the occasion of the nuptials of his son. Harper advised him to proceed to Fyzabad, for that would increase his titles and strengthen his position in the eyes of his people".⁴³

But, on the advice of his friends and well-wishers, Chait Singh, who preferred patronage of the English to the goodwill of the Nawab, on some frivolous ground, evaded going to Fyzabad.⁴⁴

In early February, 1771, Brigadier-General Robert Barker informed Chait Singh that Shuja-ud-daula would shortly come to Benares and advised him to see the *wazir*. Accordingly, on the 8th February, 1771, he went to Phulpore (20 miles from Benares) and paid his respects to the Nawab who conferred on him a *khelat*, a *sarpanch*, and a sword.⁴⁵ On February 20, 1771, the Nawab honoured Chait Singh with a visit to his house at Ramnagar, where he, in turn, performed the duties of vassalage by offering presents of money, elephants, horses, jewels, and cloths. The *wazir* fastened his turban on Chait Singh's head and, at the time of departure, honoured him with a sword. The Nawab was highly pleased with his conduct and left for Fyzabad⁴⁶ the next day.

Even after the exchange of such warm friendship, the shadow of apprehension was not removed from the mind of Chait Singh who continued to send entreaties to the English Governor for a *khelat* and a treaty.⁴⁷ In early April, 1771, Cartier promised Chait Singh that so long as he would maintain Balwant Singh's engagements with the Nawab and the English, the latter would always protect him. He sent, through Shaikh Ali Naqi, a *khelat* and an elephant, which were bestowed on Chait Singh in the garden of Madhudas.⁴⁸ The Raja, on this occasion, sent a *nazr* of 101 gold *mohurs* to the Governor.⁴⁹

As early as the 10th April, 1771, the authorities in England directed the Bengal Government to obtain the country of Balwant Singh in lieu of Kora and Allahabad, so as to make the frontier more easily defensible, to exercise greater influence with the neighbouring powers and to reduce the military expenses.⁵⁰ On June 23, 1773, the Council, while briefing Hastings for Benares Conference, asked him to procure Chait Singh's country in exchange of Kora and Allahabad, and also to open up the *wazir's* country to commercial intercourse. Hastings was further empowered to renew, on behalf of Chait Singh, the stipulation which had been formerly made with the Nawab in favour of his father.⁵¹

Regarding the exchange of territories of Chait Singh with Kora

and Allahabad, Hastings did not press it at the Benares conference (August-September, 1773). As he himself says in his Benares diary, "I knew his utter Repugnance to part with the latter (Chait Singh's country). I would not propose it, as I could not insist upon it".⁵²

Finding the Nawab "unflexibly averse" to part with Chait Singh's country, Hastings wished to secure for the Raja the same status as had been granted to his father. Hastings thought that the *wazir* would have no reasonable plea for not confirming the deed of agreement, which he had already given to Chait Singh through the solicitation of Harper.⁵³

But, this did not prove easy. The chief minister of Shuja-ud-daula pleaded in earnest terms for Hasting's consent to dispossessing the Raja of the forts of Latifpore and Bijaygarh and to exacting ten lacs of rupees from him.⁵⁴ The Nawab also claimed that Clive had agreed to his proposal of occupying the territories of Balwant Singh after his death.⁵⁵

As to the demand for free commercial intercourse with the Nawab's country, Hastings found that the *wazir* was stubbornly opposed to such concessions being granted to the Company. The solemn promise of Hastings, that the *gumashtas* would be under the control of the Nawab's own officials and that no harm would be done to his country, failed to carry conviction to Shuja-ud-daula.⁵⁶ Finding it "impossible to overcome his objections", Hastings tried to secure the same advantages from Chait Singh, in whose *zamindari* the mart of Mirzapore was situated.⁵⁷ Hastings frankly confessed in his report (4, October, 1773), "I judged it improper to press him any further to agree to innovations so much against his will, where I could effect the same purposes by an agreement with Rajah Cheyt Sing, to whom the town of Myrzapore belongs".⁵⁸

If the Nawab was firm in not conceding commercial advantages to the English Company, Hastings was no less firm in securing the stability for Chait Singh. He refused to go beyond the stipulated treaty of 1765, and gave the Nawab a form on the basis of the treaty of Allahabad, regarding his agreement with Chait Singh.⁵⁹ Hastings wrote in his Benares diary, "It is true, it (treaty of Allahabad) did not mention Cheit Sing by name nor the Family of Bulwand Sing, but was certainly understood both by my Predecessor

in the Administration and by the Company themselves, as including the whole Family and posterity of Bulwand Sing".⁶⁰ On September 7, 1773, a new agreement was concluded by the Nawab with Chait Singh, conferring on him all the possessions of his father. It was solemnly promised by Shuja-ud-daula that "no increase shall be hereafter demanded" and that "no harm shall, on any means", happen to him.⁶¹ Hastings also gave a written assurance to Chait Singh, on the same day, that, if he regularly paid the stipulated amount of annual revenue, the Company would always attend to his welfare and see that there should never be any deviation from, or breach of, the present treaty.⁶²

The available Persian sources⁶³ testify to the fact that Shuja-ud-daula wanted to oust Chait Singh from his *zamindari*. The Benares Diary of Hastings bears it out. Hastings reported to the Council, on October 4, 1773, "I am well-convinced that the Rajah's inheritance and perhaps his life are no longer safe than while he enjoys Company's protection which is his due by Ties of Justice and Obligations of public faith and which policy enjoins us to afford him evermost effectually".⁶⁴ But it must also be taken into account that, ever since August 1765, it had been the established policy of the British in India to protect this semi-independent frontier kingdom against the aggressive designs of the Nawab of Awadh. Hastings himself reported to the Council on October 4, 1773, "His country is a strong Barrier to ours, without subjecting us to any expense and we may depend on him as a sure ally whenever we may stand in need of his services".⁶⁵ Moreover, the British commercial interest prompted the Bengal Government to give protection to the Raja of Benares. But, it should also be noted, that Balwant Singh knew how to defend himself against the machinations of the Nawabs of Awadh, but this young inexperienced Raja was totally incapable of protecting himself. There was stubborn opposition of the orthodox Brahmins ; there were two candidates aspiring after the *zamindari* of Benares. And, the ends of the British policy could be well served, either by a Maniyar Singh, or by a Mahipnarain. In this context, ensuring Chait Singh the *zamindari* of Benares was definitely a signal service done by Hastings to him.⁶⁶

On October 4, 1773, the Secret Committee resolved that the interests of the Company were properly served by supporting Chait Singh in conformity with the political system, laid down and repeatedly enforced by the Court of Directors.⁶⁷

Some subsidiary problems were also settled at the Benares conference. Hastings proposed to Chait Singh, on September 8, 1773, that he should furnish a part of his cavalry to assist the English troops in expelling the *sannyasis*, if occasion so required, and offered to give the cavalry army, thus employed, an additional pay. The Raja welcomed the proposal, but declined the offer of additional pay.⁶⁸

As to the residence of the Europeans in his country, Chait Singh was not in favour of it, because, some of the English men employed labourers without remuneration.⁶⁹ So, it was arranged that general residence of Europeans in his country would be forbidden but, some particular individuals,⁷⁰ under special indulgence, might be permitted to stay in his *zamindari*.

Hastings went to Chunar on the 11th September, and found that the *ghats* of Sultanpore and some other places had been leased by the Nawab to Sidi Muhammad Jafar Khan and that quarrels broke out frequently over the transit duties between the leaseholder's men and traders visiting Chunar. Hastings advised Chait Singh to procure from the leaseholder the right to collect the transit duties by paying him a lump sum.⁷¹ Accordingly, Chait Singh secured the right to collect transit duties at the *ghats* of Sultanpore, Bahramganj etc. by paying Rs. 5,000 to Sidi Muhammad.⁷²

In November, 1773, Chait Singh wrote to Hastings that Muir, the officer commanding at Chunar, did not give up the villages adjacent to the fort which Wilding, his predecessor, had forcibly occupied. These places yielded a nominal revenue of Rs. 1,000 a year, but, their forcible seizure, by the military authorities, told heavily upon his prestige. Hastings ordered Muir to restore these villages to the Raja, as they were not included within the boundary of Chunargarh.⁷³

In early 1775, Chait Singh lodged a complaint with Hastings that his collection had been suffering considerably owing to the stationing of *harkaras* by Muir on different *chowkeys* on the way to

Chunargarh, Benares, and Mirzapore. Muir was further charged with collecting duties from pilgrims going to Benares to perform their devotions.⁷⁴ On May 22, 1775, Hastings informed Muir about those charges. Muir went to Benares on the 19th June, and Chait Singh admitted to him that he had brought those charges on misrepresentation of facts by his officers.⁷⁵ The Bengal Government acquitted Muir of the charges, but ordered that, neither the officer commanding, nor any other officer of the garrison of Chunar, should go to Benares without the previous permission of the authorities⁷⁶ at Fort William.

But, Shuja-ud-daula still remained a headache to the Raja and tried in various ways to reduce his power and position. While Hastings was at Benares, an assurance was given by the Nawab that Garwara and nineteen villages in the *sarkar* of Jaunpore should be continued to Chait Singh on the same term, i.e., on payment of Rs. 1,75,000 a year; but after his departure, the *wazir* demanded an augmentation by Rs. 75,000 on the previous revenue. The Nawab also demanded an increase of Rs. 75,000 on the revenue of the Khairabad *pargana* in Allahabad. The *wazir's* men forcibly took possession of Garwara and the nineteen villages. He also leased Khairabad *pargana* to Sidi Muhammad Basir Khan. Chait Singh sought protection of Hastings, who, on February 6, 1774, reminded the Nawab of the treaty obligations of both the Company and the *wazir* to confirm Chait Singh in all the possessions of his father, and asked him to restore Garwara and the nineteen villages to the Raja. As to Khairabad *pargana*, Hastings asked him to consider the fact that the Raja had been holding it as a lease from the King for Rs. 1,75,000 per annum.⁷⁷ In order to vex Chait Singh, Shuja-ud-daula intended to give a *sanad* to Shahab Khan, a dismissed official of Chait Singh, for the *sarkar* of Jaunpore and to procure for him a *khelat* from the King. The Raja brought these intrigues to the notice of the English authorities. Hastings reacted sharply to these mean machinations of the Nawab and advised Middleton, the British Resident at Fyzabad, and Champion, the commander of the British forces in Awadh, to set the matters right.⁷⁸

These small incidents clearly show that Chait Singh's alliance with the English Company stood as his bulwark of protection.

On December 5, 1773, Thomas Pattle, the collector of Lakshmipore, reported to the Bengal Government the appearance of about three thousand well armed and organised *sannyasis* at Supganje from Birbhum.⁷⁹ They had been committing considerable depredations in Bengal.⁸⁰ Hastings asked Chait Singh to supply five hundred horse for driving away the *sannyasis* and offered an additional pay of Rs. 20 per *sawar*. Capt. Toone was sent to take delivery of five hundred horse.⁸¹ On January 19, 1774, Chait Singh despatched Hazi Najib Ali Khan with five hundred horse to Toone and directed them to exert utmost in the Company's service.⁸²

Just after the elapse of thirteen months, an armed body of 20,000 men assembled near Allahabad, describing themselves as religious men. In view of regular ravages committed by the *sannyasis* in the provinces of the English Company for some years past, a strict vigilance on such bodies was necessary.⁸³ Though they gave out that they would return soon to their respective villages, yet it was reported that their intention was to move eastward in small batches of 200 or 250 men.⁸⁴

As these well-armed and well-equipped "pilgrims" must pass through Chait Singh's country, he could provide the best barrier against their impending inroads. The Bengal Government, on March 30, 1775, asked the Raja of Benares to make every endeavour to compel the *sannyasis* to disband and, if they did not, to oppose their entry into his or the Company's territories in concert with Muir.⁸⁵

Chait Singh at once responded to the call and issued orders to all *faujdar*s and *zamindar*s, on the frontiers of his country, to keep vigilant watch and to transmit any information they might get of the movements of the *sannyasis*. The strict security measures taken by the Raja and the officer commanding at Chunar forced the *sannyasis* to disperse and have recourse to a downward march.⁸⁶ Thus, Chait Singh played a positive role in warding off the *sannyasi* menace and rendered yeoman's service to the English.

Shuja-ud-daula was never tired of teasing Chait Singh. Though the Raja paid off the revenue for the year 1181 *fasli* on the scheduled date, the Nawab asked Chait Singh in November, 1774, to pay a lump sum of five lacs to the Company and to deduct fifty thousand

from his monthly *kists*, till the sum of five lacs was made up. The Raja refused to pay the *tankhwah*, unless he was assured that no further demand would be made upon him in future. The Nawab declined to make such commitment.⁸⁷ The Bengal Government asked Chait Singh in December, 1774, to pay this *tankhwah*, but assured him that it would intimate to the *wazir* not to make any further demands, till the amount was liquidated.⁸⁸ Chait Singh, accordingly, paid the said amount to Motte in early January, 1775.⁸⁹

The period of prosperity of Chait Singh, when he was basking in British favour, also contained the seeds of his later tragedy. His whole career was materially affected by the orthodox Brahmin opposition to his succession, and also, to a large extent, by internal feuds and dissensions in his *zamindari*. For some time after his accession, Chait Singh did not venture to claim "caste-equality" by proposing to eat with his kinsmen. But when, in the wake of the treaty of Benares, the protection of the English Company considerably strengthened his position, he invited Maniyar Singh to dine with him, on the advice of Ausan Singh. Maniyar Singh, a proud and highminded Bhumihaar Brahmin, refused to respond to the invitation of an offspring of a Bhumihaar father and a Rajput mother.⁹⁰ The Raja's *amour-propre* was highly offended, and he removed Maniyar Singh from the assigned farm.⁹¹

On May 19, 1774, Maniyar Singh assembled his servants in his house and planned a conspiracy. When it leaked out, he fled with his family to Durgakund, on the otherside of the Ganga.⁹² Again, when it was brought to light that he had entered into an agreement with a man, promising him to pay Rs. 10,000 and two villages, if he would do away with the Raja, Maniyar Singh fled from Durgakund towards Allahabad.⁹³

Chait Singh asked his *wakil* to draw the attention of Hastings to the evil designs of Maniyar Singh, and himself wrote to the Governor, soliciting his protection. Hastings in June, 1774, assured the Raja that he would not tolerate the conduct of Maniyar Singh.⁹⁴

About this time, the wife of the Raja's younger brother, Sujan Singh, died. Chait Singh asked his *dewan* to ascertain who were likely to participate in the obsequial feast and who were likely to refuse it, so that no slight might be offered to him by anyone.

declining the invitation to the dinner. The *dewan* told him that none would dare refuse the funeral feast. All Brahmin relatives of the Raja were accordingly invited. Jaggerdeva Singh, Jagat Singh, Zalim Singh, Prataprudra Singh, and other prominent members of the Bhumihar Brahmin community came to attend the funeral ceremony. When the meal was served, the leaders of the Brahmin community told the Raja that they were prepared to dine with him, provided Ausan Singh, who was a Gautam Brahmin and the highest in rank, partook of the feast with him. Chait Singh was overconfident that Ausan Singh, who was his well-wisher, would not decline to dine with him. So, he readily accepted the proposal and sent for Ausan Singh. But the *dewan*, on the pretence of illness, did not turn up. The Raja himself went to the house of Ausan Singh, but got no satisfactory explanation from the *dewan*.⁹⁵

Next day, by the advice of his well-wishers, Chait Singh called for all the top officials of the state and gave them *khelats*, suitable to their rank. He took upon himself the management of the affairs of the *zamindari*⁹⁶ and adopted stern measures against all those who had refused to eat with him. Premnarain Singh, Brahmadutta Singh, Ajaib Singh, and others were kept under virtual confinement; many lost their property.⁹⁷ Ausan Singh was declared an outlaw.⁹⁸ Those who dined with Chait Singh received liberal grants, Jaggerdeva Singh, for instance, receiving an allowance of Rs. 5,500 per annum.⁹⁹

Apprehending torture at the hands of the Raja, Ausan Singh fled away with 200 devoted followers to Darikhoo, near the border of Chait Singh's country, and from there, he went to Jhusi (opposite to Allahabad) where he was arrested by the servants of Maniyar Singh who had previous enmity with him.¹⁰⁰ Ausan Singh, however, tackled the situation very tactfully and entered into an alliance with Maniyar Singh by promising to procure him the government of Benares.¹⁰¹

Ausan Singh and Maniyar Singh plundered some of the villages within the Raja's territory in early October, 1774. Chait Singh sent his brother, Sujan Singh, with troops against them and applied for assistance to Muir who sent two battalions of troops with two guns.¹⁰² The Raja reported to the Governor that Ausan Singh and

Maniyar Singh would not have acted in this manner if they had not been instigated by the Nawab.¹⁰³ Hastings took prompt action, and on October 13, 1774, asked Shuja-ud-daula to expel Maniyar Singh and Ausan Singh from his dominions.¹⁰⁴

In the meanwhile, Sujan Singh, with the assistance of the English troops, defeated Maniyar Singh, who, being hopeless and helpless, took asylum with Nauroz Ali Khan, the *amil* of Pratapgarh.¹⁰⁵ Chait Singh paid a *nazr* of 21 gold *mohurs* to Hastings, on the occasion of his victory, and requested him to write to the *wazir* to turn the rebels out of his dominions.¹⁰⁶ As requested by the Raja, Hastings wrote to Middleton that he should ask the Nawab that the latter must not give Maniyar Singh his protection, but must urge the *naib suba* of Allahabad and Nauroz Ali Khan to expel the rebel from their districts, as his presence would prove a great impediment to the collection of revenue by the Raja.¹⁰⁷ Middleton procured letters from the Nawab to the *naib suba* and also to Nauroz Ali Khan to expel Maniyar Singh from their districts.¹⁰⁸ Getting scent of these orders, Ausan Singh fled across the Yamuna to Chitrakut in Bundelkhand.¹⁰⁹

But the *wazir* was not to lose this handy weapon to beat up the Raja. Although he publicly wrote to the *naib suba* and the *amil* of Pratapgarh to expel the rebels, yet he secretly sent for them.¹¹⁰

Maniyar Singh remained with Nauroz Ali Khan for a length of time. Ausan Singh, from Chitrakut, had been writing letters to Maniyar Singh, wherein he proposed that they both would go to Lucknow so that the government of Benares might be procured for him, through Elich Khan.¹¹¹ On the suggestion of Elich Khan, the Nawab summoned Maniyar Singh from Allahabad and Ausan Singh from Bundelkhand.¹¹² Ausan Singh came to Pratapgarh in early January, 1775, and the two set out for Fyzabad in response to the call of the chief minister of the Nawab.¹¹³

At this open act of hostility by the Nawab, Chait Singh became extremely alarmed and sent frantic appeals to Hastings to intervene, on his behalf, because the active instigation to the rebels, by the court of the *wazir*, diminished his prestige, invited lawlessness in his *zamindari* and impeded the work of collection of the revenues.¹¹⁴ The Bengal Government could no longer be a silent spectator to

the base machinations of the court of the Nawab and asked the Nawab to stop playing the game.¹¹⁵ On March 15, 1775, Chait Singh reported to Hastings that Elich Khan had removed Ausan Singh from the *wazir's* army, but Maniyar Singh was still in the service.¹¹⁶

Finding that the Nawab was not prepared to do anything by openly flouting the Bengal Government, Ausan Singh left Fyzabad and returned to Allahabad. From there, he tried to procure for himself from Nauroz Ali Khan two or three *mahals*, adjacent to the territory of the Raja, with the intention of causing disturbances in the *zamindari* of Chait Singh.¹¹⁷ Maniyar Singh also came there. But, owing to the strong attitude of the Bengal Government, the officials of the *wazir* did not publicly extend any help to the rebels. Maniyar Singh, now quite helpless, made overtures for submission to Chait Singh who readily patched up his differences with him.¹¹⁸ But, Ausan Singh, who was determined on ruining the Raja, did not return. He rightly felt that the source of strength of Chait Singh lay in the steady support of the English and, unless this fountain-head of power could be blocked, the stream of prosperity of the Raja would flow unabated. So, the evil star of Chait Singh changed its place. Ausan Singh set out for Patna and wished to proceed to Calcutta, but, failing to obtain the Governor-General's permission, he stopped short at Murshidabad.¹¹⁹

After the death of Shuja-ud-daula on January 26, 1775, his son and successor, Asaf-ud-daula, continued to pursue the policy of his father towards the *zamindari* of Benares in a more rigorous manner. He proposed to issue two *tankhwahs* on Chait Singh; by one, the Raja was required to pay five lacs of rupees to Elich Khan, and by another, six lacs of rupees to the English Company.¹²⁰ Chait Singh reported to his *wakil*, Ali Nawaz Khan, on March 19, 1775, "You are well acquainted with the Nabob's disposition and he is continually devising means to bring me under the Governor's displeasure. He has concluded in his mind that I will not consent to the payment of advances, lest it will be considered as a Precedent and that by refusing to do so, I shall fall under the Governor's displeasure". Chait Singh asked his *wakil* to represent the evil designs of Asaf-ud-daula to Hastings in private.¹²¹ The Bengal

Government wrote to Bristow, the British Resident at Fyzabad, to "remonstrate to the Nabob against such Proceedings," showing that they were unjust and contrary to his engagement with the Raja, of which they were the guarantees.¹²²

Bristow communicated the views of the Bengal Government to Asaf-ud-daula in early April, 1775. The Nawab, at first, expressed bitter resentment at the Company's attempts to protect Chait Singh, whom he regarded as his *zamindar*, and claimed that he was fully entitled to demand his rents from his *zamindar* in advance.¹²³ Bristow, then, quoted the treaty concluded between the late Nawab and the Raja of Benares, under the English guarantee, that no demand would be made on him except the stipulated *kists*. He also told the Nawab that the English Company would not tolerate any encroachment on the Raja's rights and reminded him, "We expect to see him protected, for that he was not to be put upon a Footing with his other zemindars".¹²⁴

This attitude of the English Company towards the *zamindari* of Benares was reflected in the discussions of the Council on the formation of a fresh treaty with the new Nawab of Awadh.¹²⁵ On March 3, 1775, the Council resolved that the Raja of Benares should exercise a free and independent authority in his dominion, subject only to the payment of a tribute.¹²⁶ On March 24, 1775, it was written to the Court of Directors, by the Bengal Government, that it was determined to confirm and guarantee the perpetual and independent possession of Benares and its dependencies to Chait Singh and "his heirs forever", subject only to the annual payment of the revenue hitherto paid to the late *wazir*,¹²⁷ and that Chait Singh "should be rendered totally independent and left to exercise a free authority in his dominions, subject only to the payment of his Tribute".¹²⁸

On May 16, 1775, it was formally written to Asaf-ud-daula that the cession of the revenues and perpetual jurisdiction of Chait Singh's *zamindari* should be one of the main conditions in the proposed treaty.¹²⁹ On this condition, Asaf-ud-daula signed a treaty with the English on the 21st May, 1775.¹³⁰ Bristow informed the Bengal Government, on the next day, about the conclusion of the treaty of Fyzabad, which was to become operative after one and a half month. Bristow also took from the Nawab *parwanas*

in the name of Chait Singh on the *kotwal* and Mint-master at Benares.¹³¹

The *zamindari* of Benares and its dependencies having been ceded in perpetuity to the Company by the fifth article of the treaty of Fyzabad,¹³² it became necessary to determine in what manner the sovereign right should be exercised and the regular payment of the revenue, due from the Raja, be ensured. As a matter of fact, from that period the province of Benares was drawn into the vortex of the Council politics at Calcutta.

On June 12, 1775, Hastings submitted a plan¹³³ to the Council with the object of making effective provisions for the interest of the Company without encroaching on the rights of the Raja or on the engagements actually subsisting with him and thereby saving him from being reduced "to the mean and depraved state of a mere Zemindar".

According to this plan, the Raja would be empowered to exercise "a complete and uncontrolled authority over his Zamindari under the acknowledged Sovereignty of the Company" on payment of a yearly revenue of Rs. 22,48,449 into the treasury of the Company at Patna. Neither should any extra demand be made upon the Raja, nor would any person be allowed to interfere with his authority. Hastings fixed the above-mentioned sum, because this was what the Raja had been actually paying to the *wazir*. Patna was mentioned as the venue of payment on the ground that it was the nearest provincial station outside his kingdom and that it would also make the appointment of a Resident at Benares, who might infringe the rights of the Raja, unnecessary. The *kotwali* and the Mint at Benares should be handed over to him, because it would make him free from all vexations which he had to face at the hands of the Nawab. The Raja would be required to keep for the service of the English Company a body of two thousand horse, which should receive an additional pay proportionate to their rank, while engaged by them. The presence of this well-disciplined cavalry was to give credit to the Raja and render service to the Company, if occasion so required.

Hastings contended that the voluntary restraint, laid by the Company on its own actions, would afford the Raja the greatest

confidence and would naturally instil into him sentiments of fidelity and attachment from the principles of gratitude and self-interest. Hastings observed, "By encouragement and protection, he may prove a profitable dependant, a useful barrier and even a powerful ally to the Company ; but he will be neither, if the conditions of his connection with the Company are left open to future variations".¹³⁴

The plan of Hastings, as drawn on June 12, 1775, was placed before the Council on July 5, 1775. The *wakil* of Chait Singh also attended the Board, in consequence of the desire of the Governor-General, and narrated that a *kistbandee* was framed at the commencement of every revenue year for the payment of the stipulated sum by monthly instalments in the house of Kashmiri Mal and Lala Bachhraj, the two principal shroffs of Benares, who received the payment on behalf of the Nawab, and that the expenses of shroffage were defrayed by the *wazir*.¹³⁵ When the *wakil* was asked, if the Raja was prepared to pay in Calcutta, he replied that Calcutta, as a venue of payment, would involve unnecessary risk and expense to the Raja. On the insistence of Francis, Clavering and Monson, Calcutta was fixed as the place of payment, though Hastings suggested in vain that it would put the Raja to unnecessary risk and expense.

It was resolved, "agreed to the first article of the plan, but it be proposed to the Rajah to pay his tribute at Calcutta in stead of Patna".¹³⁶ As to the handing over of the Mint and *kotwali* to Chait Singh, it was resolved that compensation should be demanded from him for these benefits and that he would be asked to coin money of precise standard which should be fixed by the Board. The article, regarding the fixation of yearly revenue, could not be approved for want of definite information, though it was tentatively fixed at Rs. 23,72,656-as. 12.¹³⁷

Thus, the first three articles of the Governor-General's plan were approved with some alterations and one reservation ; but the fourth article, relating to the keeping of a cavalry, met with stubborn opposition from the councillors and it was at last resolved to recommend to the Raja to keep up a body of two thousand horse, disciplined after European manner, but was not obligatory on him.¹³⁸

The fifth article, which was read and approved without opposition, ran as follows : "That while the Rajah shall continue faithful to these engagements and punctual in his payments and shall pay due obedience to the authority of the Government, no more demands shall be made upon him by the Hon'ble Company of any kind or on any pretence whatsoever ; nor shall any person be allowed to interfere with his authority or to disturb the peace of his country".¹³⁹

On August 16, 1775, the Council sat for "the consideration of the settlement to be made with Rajah Cheyt Sing for his annual Tribute".¹⁴⁰

Clavering placed before the Board some information regarding the Mint at Benares and the *kotwali* at Benares and Jaunpore. According to the estimate of Clavering, the Mint-master at Benares paid thirty-six to forty thousand rupees a year to the Nawab and, for this purpose, duties collected on some articles¹⁴¹ were paid to him. From the *kotwal* of Benares,¹⁴² the Nawab collected twelve thousand rupees. When the *wakil* of Chait Singh was called upon to give his account, he gave a more modest account of the incomes from these two sources. According to him, the *darogha* of the Mint had never paid more than Rs. 16,000 to Shuja-ud-daula, but Asaf-ud-daula raised it to Rs. 25,000 by increasing the percentage of alloy in coins by $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The net income from the *kotwali* of Benares was Rs. 5,000 and that of Jaunpore was Rs. 10,000. The net revenue received by Shuja-ud-daula was Rs. 23,72,656-as. 12, and the extra revenue received by the Nawab independent of the Raja i.e. from the *kotwals* of Benares and Jaunpore, mint-master, controller of weights and measures, and the clerk of the market brought the total to Rs. 24,04,806 at the utmost. The duties collected from these sources were so small that they were levied more with a view to keeping up the Nawab's authority than for any real benefit.¹⁴³

Hastings accepted the version of the *wakil* of Chait Singh and proposed that Rs. 23,72,656 should be fixed as the yearly revenue to be paid by the Raja. But the majority of the Councillors were not satisfied with the available information and resolved that Chait Singh should pay to the Company the exact amount he had been

paying to the Nawab and that further enquiries should be held to ascertain other benefits which the Nawab had derived from the province of Benares. Clavering observed, "I do not mean to deprive the Rajah of the benefits of the Mint or the Cutwally, but I think as frugal stewards for the Company, we ought to avail ourselves of the benefit of those advantages".¹⁴⁴ He suggested that a Company's servant should be sent to Benares to carry with him the *sanads* of investiture to the Raja from the Company, to ascertain the benefits of the Nawab from Benares and to study the working of the Mint.¹⁴⁵

Barwell recommended that Muir, the commanding officer at Chunar, might be entrusted with the job. Hastings opposed the appointment of Muir and proposed that a covenanted officer might be appointed. In spite of the vehement opposition of Hastings and Barwell, the majority in the Council decided on the 16th August, 1775, to appoint Francis Fowke. Hastings observed in bitterness, "I consider the present appointment not of Mr. Francis Fowke but Mr. Joseph Fowke, whose influence over his son will reduce the authority of the latter to a mere shadow. I, therefore, disapprove of the motion. I protest against it".¹⁴⁶

Thus, for long three months, the Council failed to fix the tribute to be paid by the Raja of Benares, though his rights and obligations were settled on July 5, 1775, without any drastic modification on the original proposal of Hastings, submitted on June 12, 1775.

On August 24, 1775, Francis Fowke was appointed on a fixed salary of Rs. 1,000 for the delivery of the *sanads* of investiture to the Raja and for making enquiries into the mint, coinage, *kotwalies*, trade and commerce of the province.¹⁴⁷ He was instructed to notify to the Raja of the change of sovereignty and to receive publicly a *nazrana* of ten thousand rupees from him as an acknowledgement of his vassalage. Fowke was asked by the Council to assure Chait Singh that "under the acknowledged Sovereignty of the Company, we are determined to leave him the free and uncontrolled management of his country and the Collection and Regulation of the Revenues, so long as he adheres to the Terms of his Engagement and will never demand any augmentation of the annual Tribute which may be fixed".¹⁴⁸ He was also to request

the Raja to maintain a regular troop of two thousand horse, disciplined and dressed after European manner.¹⁴⁹

On the same day, Chait Singh was informed of the resolution of the Bengal Government to continue him in "as full and ample a manner" as he had been under his former sovereign, on "the same terms".¹⁵⁰ His tribute was tentatively fixed at Rs. 23,72,656-as. 12.

So, it is clear that the Bengal Government intended to exercise sovereignty over the province of Benares in the same manner, in which the Nawab of Awadh had wielded it and to leave the Raja to enjoy an uncontrolled authority in the government of his country.

On October 23, 1775, the investiture ceremony was held on a vast plain on the western outskirts of the city of Benares.¹⁵¹ The *taahud* was read to the Raja and his seal was affixed to it. Swearing upon his sword in the name of God, Chait Singh took an oath of fidelity to the Company and promised not to enter into any engagement with any other power. The *sanad* was read out to him and the *khelat* was presented.¹⁵² The *khelat* consisted of five pieces of cloth, a pair of *sarpanch*, an elephant and a horse, which were purchased at Rs. 6,248-as. 8.¹⁵³ The *dewan* of Chait Singh was also presented with a *khelat* worth Rs. 574.¹⁵⁴ Chait Singh paid a *nazrana* of Rs. 10,000 to the Company on October 21, 1775, and made three low obeisances to the power from which he had received so much favour.¹⁵⁵

On November 16, 1775, Fowke reported to the Council that the Mint at Benares had been leased in February, 1775, for Rs. 25,000 and the *darogha* of the Mint had paid about Rs. 10,000 to the Nawab. The Mint-master was engaged to make coins of 10 *massa* with the alloy of 3 *rattis* and 3 *chowls*. The rupees of best standard, coined in the Mint at Benares, were produced between the years 1766 and 1772. The Mint-master collected a few nominal taxes. The *kotwali* at Benares was given in *jagir* by Shuja-ud-daula to Elich Khan who appointed a deputy to represent him on the spot and to discharge the duties pertaining to the office. The accounts of the last seven months showed that the deputy collected above six thousand rupees of which only seven hundred were remitted to his master and the remainder was appropriated for the wages of officials and other contingent expenditure. The salary of the

kotwali officials was exorbitantly high and these offices were regarded as prize posts. The *kotwal* realised more than Rs. 10,000 as fine per year. The *kotwali* of Benares was a paying office, but the Nawab did not derive any benefit from it.¹⁵⁶ Fowke could not provide any idea as to the *kotwali* of Jaunpore, as the *kotwal* refused to disclose anything to him on the plea that he had been holding the office by an appointment from the Nawab.¹⁵⁷

On December 13, 1775, the Bengal Government settled the yearly revenue of Chait Singh at Rs. 23,40,269 *machhlidar* Rupees of 10 *massa*, the standard coin of 1766 with an alloy of 2 *rattis* and 2 *chowls* per rupee.¹⁵⁸ It was also decided that the Mint at Benares should be handed over to the Raja without any compensation, but the rupees coined at Benares must weigh 10 *massa* and contain an alloy of 2 *rattis* and 2 *chowls*. Chait Singh was made to understand, if this standard was not maintained, the Mint would be taken away from his hand.¹⁵⁹ For the *kotwalis* of Benares and Jaunpore, the Raja was to pay nothing, but he was forbidden to earn anything by oppression or sale of justice. It was specifically written to Fowke on December 13, 1775, "we shall not furnish the Rajah or the Ministers with a pretence for introducing or continuing a System of venality in his Court".¹⁶⁰ Bristow was asked to represent to Asaf-ud-daula that the *kotwal* of Jaunpore had not yet handed over his assignment to Chait Singh.¹⁶¹ The Bengal Government expected that, in return for the concessions granted to Chait Singh and for the advantages he would derive from being confirmed "in the free and independent government of his country", he would give ready compliance with other terms and undertake the remittance to Calcutta on moderate and reasonable terms.¹⁶²

On January 1, 1776, Fowke received a letter from Bristow enclosing a *parwana* from the Nawab to the *kotwal* and *killadar* of Jaunpore, directing him to consider himself as a servant of the Company.¹⁶³

Chait Singh represented to Fowke in the middle of January, 1776, that, according to the prevalent rate of exchange, Rs. 23,40,209 (Benares Sicca) would be equivalent to Calcutta *sa* Rs. 21,66,860-as. 13. He also suggested, if the standard coin was fixed at 10 *massa*, he was entitled to a deduction of Rs. 38,835-as. 13, which would be

the difference between current *machhlidar* coins and *machhlidar* coins of 10 massa. Fowke wrote to the authorities at Fort William on January 22, 1776, "I should add that this deduction will make no difference in the annual amount of Calcutta *sicca* rupees of 21,66,860-as. 13 to be delivered in Calcutta".¹⁶⁴ The Raja showed to Fowke a letter from Hastings, in which he had promised him to grant a *sanad* in perpetuity for the Mint and *kotwali* after receiving his report and pleaded for the *sanad* for the offices of the Mint and *kotwali*.¹⁶⁵ Chait Singh was averse to executing a *muchalka* in respect of weight and fineness of coins to be struck at the Benares Mint. He urged for an early settlement of the question of revenue, because everything suffered owing to uncertainty.¹⁶⁶

On February 1, 1776, the Council sat for determining the equivalent of Rs. 23,40,209 *machhlidar* rupees in Calcutta *sicca*. Hastings suggested that (after defraying charges for transport and coinage) the Raja should pay *sa* Rs. 21,81,352.¹⁶⁷ Barwell, as usual, supported the same view.¹⁶⁸ The majority of the councillors were of opinion that the Bengal Government should get the *batta* of Rs. 34,201 for delivering the Mint and *kotwali* to the Raja free of charges. So, he must pay Calcutta *sa* Rs. 22,66,180. Francis held, "If he or his Ministers persist in obstructing Business, I think, Fowke should be directed to let him know that all the terms of our proposed agreement with him will be considered and may be liable to alteration".¹⁶⁹ It was settled that he should pay *sa* Rs. 22,66,180, but he would be eligible for a commission of two per cent. The Raja was offered the option of paying either in *machhlidar* or in Calcutta *sicca*.¹⁷⁰ It was intimated to Fowke "Considering the advantageous terms for the Rajah on which we have added to him the Mint and the Kutwali and the great benefit which he must derive from the entire possession of those grants, we are in hopes that he would have no difficulty in agreeing to the rent; yet you will acquaint him of our final determination and require his answer".¹⁷¹ Thus, after bitter wrangling and nasty wire-pulling for long seven months, the Council could at last fix the annual revenue of the Raja of Benares. The majority of the Councillors vehemently opposed Hastings on every issue and carried the day. Strangely enough, in this triumph of the majority lurked the misfortune of the Raja.

The Raja accepted the terms in early February, 1776. On February 18, 1776, he executed a *muchalka* to maintain the standard coinage and gave in writing that, in case of non-compliance, he would be liable to be fined by the Bengal Government.¹⁷²

But, on the issue of maintaining 2000 horse disciplined in European manner, Chait Singh did not give his consent. He intimated to Fowke that the body of horse, which he had under his employ, had been composed chiefly of his own relations and of old and faithful adherents, whom he looked upon in the light of his relatives. These men helped him to obtain revenues by fair and gentle means. He also contended that his collection would suffer, if these men were to be discharged from their present position; at the same time, it would be difficult for him to maintain an additional burden of keeping 2000 horse.¹⁷³

On April 15, 1776, the *sanad* was granted to Chait Singh, confirming him in the *zamindari* of four *sarkars* together with the *kotwalis* of Benares and Jaunpore and the Mint at Benares.¹⁷⁴ On the 26th April, the Board sent the *sanad* and *pottah* for the *zamindari* of Benares together with the *kabuliyat* and *muchalka* to be executed by the Raja to Fowke.¹⁷⁵ Chait Singh prayed for exemption from signing a *muchalka*, by which he was to lose his *zamindari* in case of non-payment of the stipulated revenue, on the appointed date.¹⁷⁶ The Bengal Government on the 30th May intimated to Fowke that Chait Singh had been very punctual in the payment of *kists* and thus the clause in the *muchalka*, regarding penalty, might be omitted. The Raja was to be told that the Government would insist on this clause, if payments fell in arrear in near future.¹⁷⁷ When the orders of the Bengal Government were communicated to Chait Singh, the Raja pleaded for its omission in the *sanad* and *pottah*.¹⁷⁸ On June 24, 1776, the Council authorised Fowke to erase the penalty clause from the *pottah* and *sanad*.¹⁷⁹ Accordingly, Fowke acquainted the Raja with the orders of the Government and asked him in early July, to get *sanads* and *pottah*, thus corrected, and to execute his *kabuliyat*.¹⁸⁰ Chait Singh declined to accept the *sanad* and *pottah* on the ground that any erasement in the public deed like *sanad* was totally against the usage of the country. He also objected to the execution of the *kabuliyat*, unless a clause in the *sanad* declaring all former *sanads* null

and void stood annulled.¹⁸¹ On July 29, 1776, the Bengal Government ordered the Secretary to prepare a new *sanad* and a *pottah*, omitting the *muchalka* clause and also the sentence, by which all former *sanads* were declared null and void.¹⁸²

Chait Singh sent an application for the grant of *farighkhatti*, i.e., acknowledgement on the discharge of all rents and also for a *khelat* to mark the beginning of the next revenue year. The Bengal Government accepted the request for *farighkhatti* and agreed on the 29th July, 1776, to grant him a *khelat* after the completion of all annual payments, but the Raja was required to pay to the Company a *nazrana*, equal to the value of the *khelat*.¹⁸³

Fowke transmitted the corrected *sanad* and *pottah* to Chait Singh on September 4, 1776.¹⁸⁴ On September 7, a *farighkhatti* was granted to him on the completion of the payment of revenue for the first year.¹⁸⁵ On the 22nd September, the Raja received his *khelat* with due eclat and pomp.¹⁸⁶ On November 12, 1776, Fowke entrusted Chait Singh with the management of the fort and *kotwali* of Jaunpore.¹⁸⁷ Fowke enquired from the Bengal Government on December 8, 1776, whether the income of these places should be handed over to the Raja. The Council wrote on January 20, 1777, "As we have granted to him the possession of all the territories ceded by the Treaty with the Nabob, we consider the collection of Jaunpore as a right belongs to him".¹⁸⁸ The income of the fort and *kotwali* of Jaunpore, from June to November, 1776, amounted to Rs. 15,918-as. 12¹⁸⁹ and the amount was paid to Chait Singh by Graham.¹⁹⁰

From the above narrative, it would appear that Chait Singh was something more than a *zamindar* of Mughal and British India and something less than an independent prince and that his status did not undergo any substantial change when his country was transferred from the Nawab of Awadh to the English, even if the *pottah*, granted to Chait Singh, did not contain the "no increase clause". A *pottah* can have no significance without reference to the intentions and talks of the parties preceding it.

As a matter of fact in the 18th Century India, the things were in a melting pot. In such a fluid state of affairs, the terms *zamindar*, Raja, even *faujdar* etc. lacked any precise and definite connotation.

The western concepts of sovereignty, suzerainty, vassalage and even sovereign state had no specific application. In such a context, it is futile to run after legal precision in explaining the status and position, rights and obligations of the Raja of Benares.

Notes

1. Sel. Com., 9 Sep. 1770.
2. Ibid., C.P.C., III, Letter No. 352.
3. T.T., p. 63.
4. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 106.
5. Harper was the Company's representative in this succession question. He was the Commander of the 19th battalion and was then posted at Fyzabad. His opinion was, Mahipnarain had a juster claim.
6. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Oct. 1770.
7. T.T., p. 12, T.B., p. 366. Chait Singh's mother was a daughter of a Chandel Rajput zamindar of Bijaygarh in the district of Mirzapore. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore district*, I, p. 107—She was a daughter of a Rajput zamindar of Burhul pargana of Benares district.
8. A marriage between a Bhumihar Brahmin and a Rajput was highly irregular and rare in India till the other day. Graham heard rumours that Ausan Singh was the father of Chait Singh (Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, p. 95). Keith Feilling calls him illegitimate—"possibly Ausan Singh was his father", (*Hastings*, p. 260). "Chait Singh was an illegitimate son of Balwant Singh by a Rajput woman" (Davies, *Hastings and Oudh*, p. 121). Harper wrote on Oct. 4, 1770, Chait Singh "is not the issue of his wife but of a Rajepoot woman whom for her beauty he took into his house. *The difference of their Sect, for the Rajah was a Brahmin—have been productive of great disputes in the family*". From this it is clear that the differences in the family arose from the caste of the lady. Had she been "regarded as his wife" (Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770), the difference in the family would have been for maintaining a woman and not for the caste of the woman. Oldham writes in 1870, "She (mother of Chait Singh) is sometimes said to have been a slave girl. The actual fact is, as I have been informed by Rajah Sir Deo Narain Singh and many other well informed persons, that Cheyte Singh's mother was a daughter of a Zemindar of Rajpoot tribe, who occupy the Burhul Pergunnah in the Benares District, of which Sakuldeeha is the chief Village.....Her father had opposed the authority of the Rajah who attacked and plundered his house and carried off his daughter, named Panna, whom, being young and beautiful, he made his wife". (*Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 107). The Indian sources are unanimous in holding that there was a marriage between Panna and Balwant and Chait Singh was an offspring of that marriage. We may dismiss the version of Ghulam Hussain Khan, who was partial to Chait Singh. But such things cannot be said of Khairuddin, who, during the insurrection of Chait Singh,

heavily suffered for his pro-British sentiments. Even he calls the mother of Chait Singh as "the fifth wife of Balwant (*T.T.*, p. 12). One, accustomed with rigours of obnoxious caste-system prevalent in the 18th century India, can realise how ill-fated was the son of such a marriage. *T.B.*, p. 366 notes, "Because such marriages were not in practice, he kept her aloof from his palace". Moreover, one thing should be noted. We do not find a single letter from Shuja-ud-daula who was ever eager to take every advantage of the weakness of the *zamindari* of Benares, challenging his parentage. Ancient texts of Manu, Yajnavalkya, Sankha, Gouttama and Vishnu and Mitakshara permitted and recognised *Anuloma* marriages i.e. between males of higher caste and females of lower caste. (Mulla—*Principles of Hindu Law*, p. 610). *Factum Valet quod fieri non debuit*, i.e., "a fact cannot be altered by a hundred texts" is a doctrine of the Hindu Law enunciated by the author of the Dayabhaga and recognised also by the Mitakshara school. The meaning of the doctrine is that, where a fact is accomplished, in other words, where an act is done and finally completed, though it may be in contravention of a hundred directory texts, the fact will stand and the act will be deemed to be legal and binding". (Mulla, *Principles of Hindu Law*, p. 609). Thus, taking into account contemporary English and Persian sources, circumstantial evidences, and fundamentals of Hindu Law, one cannot call Chait-Singh an "illegitimate son of Balwant Singh".

9. *T.T.*, p. 63, Sel. Com., 23 Nov. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 6 Nov. 1770. Harper writes, the death bed proclamation would not have been necessary "had his pretensions been such as not to have admitted a scrutiny". The weakness of the claim of Chait Singh was owing to his irregularity of birth. He was the offspring of a marriage between a *Bhumihar* Brahmin and a Rajput. (*T.B.*, pp. 366-367).

10. *T.T.*, p. 63, *B.N.*, pp. 206-207, Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770, Alexander to Sel. Com., 25 Aug. 1770.

11. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Resolution, 19 Oct. 1770.

12. *T.T.*, p. 4.

13. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Oct. 1770. Harper describes Maniyar as an adopted son.

14. B.M. Add. MSS, No. 29, 212, Hastings' Diary No. 1.

15. Sel. Com., 25 Sep. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 25 Aug. 1770.

16. Sel. Com., 25 Sep. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Sep. 1770.

17. Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770. Alexander to Sel. Com., 26 Aug. 1770.

18. C.P.C., III, No. 377.

19. Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770, Alexander to Sel. Com., 26 Aug. 1770.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 377.

23. Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770, Alexander to Sel. Com., 26 Aug. 1770.

24. Sel. Com., 25 Sep. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 27 Aug. 1770. The word 800 in the document is not very distinct.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 353.

28. Sel. Com., 9 Sep. 1770, C.P.C., III, Letter Nos. 346, 350.
29. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 365.
30. Sel. Com., 25 Sep. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Sep. 1770. The demand of Elich Khan was for twenty lacs as *nazrana* and an increase of five lacs on the annual revenue. Chait Singh wanted to pay ten lacs as *nazrana* and an increase of one lac on the annual revenue. (Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Oct. 1770).
31. Sel. Com., 25 Sep. 1770, Sel. Com., to Harper, 25 Sep. 1770.
32. Ibid.
33. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 4 Oct. 1770. *T.T.*, p. 65, wrongly records that Shuja visited Benares. It has confused the events of 1771 with those of 1770.
34. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 8 Oct. 1770, Also Sel. Com., I.O., 23 Nov. 1770. Out of the *nazrana* of 17 lacs, the Raja was to pay 10 lacs immediately and remaining seven lacs at the end of the month of Kartik (C.P.C., III, Letter No. 424).
35. Sel. Com., 7 Nov. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 11 Oct. 1770. Also Sel. Com., I.O., 23 Nov. 1770.
36. Sel. Com., 7 Nov. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 11 Oct. 1770 and also the enclosure to this letter.
37. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 11 Oct. 1770.
38. Sel. Com., 19 Oct. 1770.
39. Ibid.
40. From Court (Pub), 28 Aug. 1771.
41. Trans. P.L.R. I, 1770, No. 230, p. 123. "My gratitude to the English sardars is so great that if every hair of my head were a tongue, even then it will be impossible for me to express it".
42. Sel. Com., I.O., 7 Feb. 1771, C.P.C., III, Letter Nos. 452, 486 and 539.
43. Sel. Com., I.O., 23 Nov. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 5 Nov. 1771.
44. Sel. Com., I.O., 5 Dec. 1770, Harper to Sel. Com., 12 Nov. 1771. Harper accused the counsellors of Chait Singh for these frivolous excuses. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 490.
45. Trans. P.L.R., 1771, No. 51, pp. 38-39.
46. Ibid., No. 55, pp. 39-40. The detailed account of this meeting is found in *T.T.*, p. 66, but this is wrongly dated. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District, I*, pp. 107-108 reproduces the account given in *T.T.*, with necessary corrections. *Siyar.*, III, p. 66 states that the first meeting of Chait Singh with Shuja took place in Sep. 1773. But that is wrong. The account given above is based on Persian letters available in the National Archives of India.
47. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 688.
48. C.P.C., III, Letter Nos. 696, 799.
49. C.P.C., III, Letter No. 799.
50. From Court (Sec), 10 Apr. 1771, para 47. This proposal was made by the Bengal Government on the 6th Jan. 1769. See, To Court (Pub), 6 Jan. 1769, Para 6.
51. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1772, No. 1, Council to Hastings, 23 June 1772.

52. B.M. Add MSS., No. 29212. Benares Diary of Hastings. Hastings writes in his diary "I had waved (Sic) all Pretensions to the Gazypoor Countries in respect with his feelings, though strongly impelled by known wishes and implied commands of my superiors". But in his official report (F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1772, No. 2) writes "I proposed to him the exchange of the territory of Rajah Cheyt Sing for them (Kora and Allahabad) but I found him unflexibly averse". Davies prefers the officials' version to the diary and writes "Shujaudaulah refused to agree to Hastings's "next proposal that Kora and Allahabad should be handed over to him in exchange for the territories of Chait Singh". (Davies, *Hastings and Oudh*, pp. 28-29). It is difficult to agree with Davies. The Court of Directors and Bengal Council had asked Hastings to exchange Kora and Allahabad for Chait Singh's territory. It was but natural for him to report to the Council that he tried for them, but failed. The Benares Diary, being his personal account, explains why he did not propose for such an exchange. He clearly notes in his Diary, "I would not propose it, as I could not insist upon it".

53. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Benares Diary of Hastings.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 2, Hastings to Council, 4 Oct. 1773.

57. Ibid. Because of its central position, the mart of Mirzapore controlled the trade of the Bengal Presidency with Central, Northern and Southern India and even with Nepal.

58. Ibid.

59. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Benares Diary of Hastings.

60. Ibid.

61. Aitchison., *Treaties* etc., II, p. 72.

62. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 7.

63. *T.T.*, p. 70. *B.N.*, pp. 224-235, describes the attempts of Shuja to displace Chait Singh. The Chap (pp. 223-236) is called "Meeting of the G.G. and Nawab Shujaudaula at Benares and expression of enmity of the Nawab towards Maharajah".

64. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 2, Hastings to Council, 4 Oct. 1773.

65. Ibid.

66. Davies, (Benares Diary of Hastings p. VII), "Had it not for Hastings's intervention on his behalf, Shujaudaula would have ousted him from his *zamin-dari*". A reading of the Persian sources (*T.T.* and *B.N.*) and available English records in India fully supports the assessment of Davies.

67. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 19, Resolution, 4 Oct. 1773.

68. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Benares Diary of Hastings. See also F.S.C., 9 Dec. 1773, No. 3. Hastings in his Benares Diary (B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212) writes that Chait Singh said "that 1000 horse should be ready for their service". On 9 Dec. 1773 he says, "whilst he was at Benares, he made a proposal to Rajah Cheyt Sing to furnish 500 horse to assist our troops". (F.S.C., 9 Dec. 1773, No. 2).

69. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Benares Diary of Hastings., C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 505.

70. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 2, Hastings to Council, 4 Oct. 1773. Fowke, Motte, Scot and a few others were permitted to stay.
71. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 521.
72. Ibid., Letter No. 522.
73. Ibid., Letter Nos. 674 and 679.
74. F.S.C., 22 May 1775, No. 14, Council to Muir, 22 May, 1775, F.S.C., 26 June 1775, No. 9, Muir to Council, 16 June, 1775.
75. F.S.C., 3 July 1775, No. 4, Muir to Council, 20 June 1775.
76. F.S.C., 26 June 1775, No. 10, Council to Muir, 26 June, 1775.
77. C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 735, 805 and 806.
78. C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 1112, 1123, 1129, 1155, 1178, 1207, 1345. Shahab Khan was an official of Chait Singh whom the Raja had appointed the *wakil* with the British Resident at Fyzabad. There he hatched a conspiracy with the Nawab. He was dismissed by the Raja and the Nawab gave him an appointment. On the intervention of Hastings, the Nawab had to dismiss him.
79. F.S.C., 9 Dec. 1773, No. 2, Pattle to Sec. Com., 5 Dec. 1773.
80. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 703.
81. F.S.C., 9 Dec. 1773, No. 2, Resolution, 9 Dec. 1773, F.S.C., 6 Jan. 1774, No. 1, C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 757.
82. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 822.
83. F.S.C., 30 Mar. 1775, No. 4, Muir to Clavering, 20 Mar. 1775.
84. F.S.C., 30 Mar. 1775, No. 5, Enclosure to Muir's letter, 20 Mar. 1775.
85. F.S.C., 30 Mar. 1775, No. 6, Council to Muir, 30 Mar. 1775. C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 1674.
86. F.S.C., 20 Apr. 1775, No. 2, Muir to Council, 9 Apr. 1775.
87. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1402, F.S.C., 2 Jan. 1775, Nos. 13-14.
88. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1474.
89. F.S.C., 18 Jan. 1775, No. 3, Middleton to Council, 10 Jan. 1775, C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 1533, 1548.
90. *T.T.*, pp. 70-71, *B.N.*, pp. 241-42.
91. *Trans. P.L.R.*, 11, No. 174, pp. 349-50.
92. Ibid., C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1076—does not give a clear picture.
93. *Trans. P.L.R.*, 11, No. 194, p. 364. *T.T.*, does not mention anything about the plot. *B.N.*, mentions attempts of Maniyar Singh against the Raja but not methodically. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1112 should be supplemented by the original letter.
94. *Trans. P.L.I.*, No. 6, p. 319. Also C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1128.
95. *B.N.*, pp. 242-245, *T.T.*, pp. 71-72. This incident is partly corroborated by a letter of Hastings available in the U. P. State Archives, "It has been intimated to me that Asfant Singh would no longer scruple to *associate with the Rajah at his Religious Festivals and acknowledge his pretensions to rank as a Brahmin*".—Hastings to Graham, 10 July 1777, Benares correspondence, II, p. 46. In one of letters in *Persian Calendar* (C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 1345) it is written that "Ausan Singh absconded from the Raja's zamindari after embezzling a large amount of money". As the above incidents took place all on a sudden, a large amount of money must have been with the dewan at the time when he refused to acknowledge the Raja's pretensions to rank, as a

Brahmin. On the face of positive assertions of contemporary Persian Chroniclers, partial corroboration in English records and prevalence of obnoxious caste rigidity in 18th century India, one cannot conclude that embezzlement of money was the cause of Ausan Singh's absconding. Embezzlement can be rationally explained in the case of Ausan-Singh, even if we accept the incident narrated above.

96. *T.T.*, pp. 72, *B.N.*, pp. 253-254, *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1311, 1317.
97. *T.T.*, pp. 72-73.
98. *B.N.*, p. 254.
99. Maafe Mamoollee of Janathan Duncan as quoted, Appendix 'D', in Oldham *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore district*, I, p. 120.
100. *T.T.*, p. 73, *B.N.*, p. 246, Maniyar Singh did not have good relations with Ausan Singh.
101. *T.T.*, p. 73, *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter No. 1340.
102. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1340, 1344 ; *B.N.*, pp. 259-61.
103. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter No. 1340, *B.N.*, p. 261.
104. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter No. 1345.
105. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 1357, *T.T.*, p. 73.
106. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1357, 1389.
107. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 1389.
108. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 1399, *B.N.*, p. 262.
109. *T.T.*, p. 73.
110. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter No. 1457.
111. *T.T.*, p. 74.
112. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1533, 1548.
113. *Ibid.*, Letter Nos. 1548, 1573 & 1588.
114. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 1573, *B.N.*, p. 263.
115. *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1588 & 1605.
116. *F.S.C.*, 30 Mar. 1775, No. 2, Chait Singh to Council, 19 Mar. 1775, *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter Nos. 1651, 1664.
117. *T.T.*, p. 74, *F.S.C.*, 30 Mar. 1775, No. 2, Chait Singh to Hastings, 19 Mar. 1775.
118. *T.T.*, p. 74, *C.P.C.*, IV, Letter No. 1773. This is corroborated by later events.
119. *T.T.*, p. 74. This incident must have taken place in the later part of 1776. (*C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 465). The episodes of Ausan Singh and Maniyar Singh are found in *T.T.*, pp. 70-74, *B.N.*, pp. 241-267, and Persian letters. There are two or three passing references in the English records. *B.N.* gives almost all the facts but not methodically. It emphasises on the mental agony and attitude of Chait Singh and the chapter is called "Danger to the Raja, attack of his relations and his restlessness". *T.T.* does not throw any light on the role of the English in this episode and commits some factual errors, such as Maniyar Singh and Ausan Singh did not go to Fyzabad, Chait Singh won over Elich Khan etc. Stray Persian letters go a long way in the reconstruction of the story.
120. *F.S.C.*, 30 Mar. 1775, No. 2, Chait Singh to Ali Nawaz Khan.
121. *Ibid.*

122. F.S.C., 30 Mar. 1775, No. 3, Council to Bristow, 30 Mar. 1775.
123. F.S.C., 27 Apr. 1775, No. 5, Bristow to Council, 14 Apr. 1775.
124. Ibid.
125. F.S.C., 13 Feb. 1775, Nos. 1-6.
126. F.S.C., 3 Mar. 1775, No. 1, Hastings calls the resolution "speculative", B.M. Add. MSS., Nos. 29, 199. But grounds given by him do not seem to be logical.
127. To Court (Sec), 24 Mar. 1775.
128. Ibid.
129. F.S.C., 6 June, 1775, No. 3, Enclosure to Bristow's letter to Council, 17 May, 1775.
130. Aitchison, *Treaties, Sanads etc.*, II, pp. 107-108.
131. F.S.C., 6 June, No. 5, Bristow to Council, 22 May 1775.
132. F.S.C., 6 June 1775, No. 3, Aitchison, *Treaties, Sanads etc.*, II, p. 107.
133. F.S.C., 12 June 1775, Nos. 2 & 3, Minute of Hastings.
134. Ibid.
135. F.S.C., 5 July 1775, No. 2.
136. Ibid.
137. Ibid., C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 1926, 1929. The date given in the back of letter No. 1929 is the 5th July, 1775.
138. F.S.C., 5 July 1775, No. 2.
139. Ibid. It is evident that it was unanimously decided that there would be no more demands than the stipulated sum and the Raja should exercise his authority without interference.
140. F.S.C., 16 Aug. 1775, No. 6.
141. Gold thread, jewels, elephant's teeth, lac, lead, light wood used for making boxes and baskets, places of Hindu worship in course of construction, etc.
142. The duty of the *kotwal* was to take cognizance of all misdemeanours committed within the city. He collected a small duty on grain, salt, oil and spices and a small tax on public stews, gaming houses and pilgrims bathing in the Ganga.
143. F.S.C., 16 Aug. 1775, Nos. 6-7.
144. F.S.C., 16 Aug. 1775, No. 7.
145. Ibid.
146. Ibid.
147. F.S.C., 24 Aug. 1775, No. 3.
148. Ibid., Instructions to Fowke.
149. Ibid. It was also written to Fowke that the Company would pay a gratuity of Rs. 15 per month for each cavalry man and in proportion, to the officers during the time they might be in the Company's employ.
150. F.S.C., 24 Aug. 1775, No. 3, Council to Chait Singh, 24 Aug. 1775.
151. F.S.C., 8 Jan. 1776, No. 22, Fowke to Council, 20 Dec. 1775. Fowke preferred open space to the palace of the Raja on two counts. The palace of the Raja was situated on the other side of the Ganga. So it was not possible to go in a procession to the palace from the city. Secondly, it would have created an impression in the public that the Raja was not paying sufficient respect and honour to the power giving him the insignia of authority.
152. F.S.C., 8 Jan. 1776, No. 22, Fowke to Council, 20 Dec. 1775.

153. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1775, No. 5.
154. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1775, No. 7.
155. F.S.C., 9 Nov. 1775, No. 2, Fowke to Council, 30 Oct. 1775. F.S.C., 8 Jan. 1776, No. 22, Fowke to Council, 20 Dec. 1775.
156. F.S.C., 13 Dec. 1775, No. 2, Fowke to Council, 16 Nov. 1775.
157. Ibid.
158. F.S.C., 13 Dec. 1775, No. 2, Resolution of the Council.
159. F.S.C., 13 Dec. 1775, No. 5, Council to Fowke, 13 Dec. 1775.
160. Ibid.
161. F.S.C., 13 Dec. 1775, No. 4, Council to Bristow, 13 Dec. 1775.
162. F.S.C., 13 Dec. 1775, No. 5, Council to Fowke, 13 Dec. 1775.
163. F.S.C., 1 Feb. 1776, No. 1, Fowke to Council, 22 Jan. 1776. Fowke did not hand over the fort and *kotwali* of Jaunpore at once to Chait Singh.
164. F.S.C., 1 Feb. 1776, No. 1, Fowke to Council, 22 Jan. 1776.
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid.
167. F.S.C., 1 Feb. 1776, No. 4.
168. Ibid.
169. Ibid.
170. Ibid.
171. F.S.C., 1 Feb. 1776, No. 5, Council to Fowke, 1 Feb. 1776.
172. F.S.C., 26 Feb. 1776, No. 5, Fowke to Council, 18 Feb. 1776. Fowke admitted, he gave wrong information in his letter of the 16th Nov. 1775 that the standard coin of the Benares Mint was of 10 *massa*. He wrote on 18 Feb. 1776, that it was of 9 *massa*, 6 *rattis*, 3 *chowls*. So Chait Singh executed the bond for coining rupees of 9 *massa*, 6 *rattis* and 3 *chowls*.
173. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1776, No. 1, Fowke to Council, 19 Mar. 1776.
174. F.S.C., 15 Apr. 1776, No. 11.
175. F.S.C., 30 May 1776, No. 3, Fowke to Council, 16 May 1776.
176. F.S.C., 30 May 1776, No. 6, Petition of Chait Singh.
177. F.S.C., 30 May 1776, No. 7, Council to Fowke, 30 May 1776.
178. F.S.C., 24 June 1776, No. 2, Fowke to Council, 13 June 1776.
179. F.S.C., 24 June 1776, No. 3, Council to Fowke, 24 June 1776. "As we have not insisted on the insertion of the clause respecting the penalty in the agreement of the Rajah, the Instrument, which is to be executed by him, cannot now be called a *Muchulka*".
180. F.S.C., 29 July 1776, No. 8, Fowke to Council, 17 July 1776.
181. Ibid.
182. Ibid., Order of the Council, 29 July 1776.
183. F.S.C., 29 July 1776, No. 9, Council to Fowke, 29 July 1776.
184. F.S.C., 21 Oct. 1776, No. 14, Fowke to Council, 25 Sep. 1776.
185. F.S.C., 21 Oct. 1776, No. 17.
186. F.S.C., 21 Oct. 1776, No. 14, Fowke to Council, 25 Sep. 1776.
187. F.S.C., 20 Jan. 1777, No. 14, Fowke to Council, 8 Dec. 1776.
188. F.S.C., 20 Jan. 1777, No. 15, Council to Graham, 20 Jan. 1777.
189. F.S.C., 20 Jan. 1777, No. 14.
190. Benares correspondence, II, p. 8, Council to Graham, 20 Jan. 1777.

CHAPTER IV

DEPOSITION OF CHAIT SINGH (1777—1781)

On the arrival of the Councillors in India on October 19, 1774, the English in Calcutta and throughout the rest of the country split up into two opposite factions, one, following Clavering, and the other, adhering to Hastings.¹ Clavering had a majority in the Council. During the transfer of the province of Benares, the views of Clavering and his clique, overriding those of Hastings, were carried into execution. In this context, Chait Singh secretly paid *nazrs* to Clavering and at times wrote to Francis about his difficulties.² Hastings concealed his resentment and referred the affairs of the *zamindari* of Benares to Clavering.³

On the death of Monson, (25 September, 1776),⁴ Hastings became supreme in the Council⁵ by virtue of his casting vote and set to undo the work of Clavering and his friends. On December 23, 1776, Hastings removed Fowke on the pretence of "annulling his commission"⁶ and appointed Thomas Graham the Resident at Benares for the purpose of demanding and receiving bills of exchange from the Raja for his monthly *kists* and "for transacting any occasional Business" which might arise between the Government and Chait Singh.⁷ D. C. Barwell, a brother of Councillor Barwell, was appointed assistant Resident who, in Graham's opinion, had no public duty to perform.⁸ With this appointment, Chait Singh became alarmed at the movements of his arch-enemy, Ausan Singh, and in the beginning of January, 1777, requested the Governor-General that his *ex-dewan* might not be permitted to see him, should he come to Calcutta.⁹ On this change, Khairuddin observes, "Now however, having overcome his opponents and replaced the Officers appointed by them with his own friends, he (Hastings) retaliated upon those who had intrigued with General Clavering, amongst whom he counted Chet Sing."¹⁰

Graham, who arrived at Benares in the middle of January, 1777, was determined "to build up the political power of the Residency

and a fortune for himself at the cost of the Raja."¹¹ He was bent upon crushing the Raja, as he wrote to Anderson, his business partner, on April 5, 1777, "Oh if I had but even a shadow of authority, I would make him feel very sore for his indifference. But I hope the day will yet come when I shall have it in my power to bring him on his marrow bones."¹² But he was cautious "of running the risk of giving disgust" to Hastings,¹³ and moved slowly.

The usual practice of remittances of revenue by Chait Singh was that the shroffs transferred the bullion to Murshidabad, coined it there, and then sent the same to Calcutta. But, at the news of the abolition of the Murshidabad Mint,¹⁴ the shroffs doubled the rate of premium. So, Chait Singh in the middle of May, 1777, prayed for 15 or 20 days' grace in the payment of the next *kist*. He also sought permission to discharge the *kists* in gold *mohurs*, coined at Benares with the impression of the Calcutta Mint.¹⁵ Graham, who had not yet known the mind of Hastings, recommended the Raja's case to the Government.¹⁶

But the Council on June 2, 1777, accepted neither the pretext of the shroffs for higher premium on the remittances of the Raja's revenue to Calcutta, nor the plea of Chait Singh for soliciting grace in the payment of the stipulated amount. Graham was asked "to discourage any requisition" which the Raja might make contrary to the letter of their mutual agreement and to insist on "the strictest Regularity in the Raja's future payments."¹⁷ The Council disapproved of Graham's conduct for receiving from Chait Singh "so unreasonable a proposal" for permitting him to coin gold *mohurs* with the impression of the Calcutta Mint at Benares.¹⁸

The shroffs of Benares demanded a premium, on the remittances of the Raja, at the rate of 10 per cent i.e., $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 per cent more than what had been previously charged. Yet Graham regretted for having entertained this proposal of Chait Singh and assured Hastings on June 12, 1777, "In future, I will not attend to any representation of the Rajah."¹⁹

On the midnight of June 14, 1777,²⁰ the news of the acceptance of the resignation of Hastings by the Court of Directors²¹ was received in Calcutta. By the terms of the Regulating Act, Clavering, the seniormost member of the Council, claimed the post of the

Governor-General on the 20th June, but Hastings declined to step down. The matter was immediately referred to the Supreme Court which decided that Hastings did not resign.²² The “convulsion of four days”²³ shook the fortune of the Raja of Benares. Misled by the prevailing confusion and misty atmosphere at Calcutta, Maharaj Mishra, the *wakil* of Chait Singh, followed others in congratulating Clavering on this pretended elevation to the post of the Governor-General. It is contended by Persian chroniclers that the Raja had no hand in the act of his agent.²⁴ Even if the *wakil* of the Raja had congratulated Clavering without his knowledge, there is no shadow of doubt that Chait Singh himself deputed Nanha Pandit and Sambhunath to Calcutta with a letter to Clavering, and had instructed them not to convey it to “the opposite party,” till “Hastings had actually boarded the ship for his journey homewards.”²⁵ The deputation to Clavering reached Murshidabad, and heard there that Hastings had not resigned. Naturally, it did not proceed farther. Hastings said of this incident, “It is a fact, that when the unhappy divisions of our government had proceeded to an extremity bordering on Civil Violence by the attempt to wrest from me my authority, in the month of June 1777, he (Chait Singh) had deputed a man named Samboonath, with an express commission to my opponent ; and the man had proceeded as far as Moorsheidabad, when learning of the change of affairs he stopped and the Rajah recalled him.”²⁶

The role of Chait Singh in the above incident must have been very shocking to Hastings, for the Raja was the man, whom he once looked upon as his son and, for whose rights and interests he had fought many a grim battle in the Council. It thus accelerated the trouble for Chait Singh,²⁷ which had already originated from the unfounded reports of his hobnobbing with the opponents of the Governor-General.²⁸ The posting of Graham as the Resident at Benares had made the matters worse for him.

Hastings wanted to retaliate, and found an easy instrument in Ausan Singh, who was as “a man qualified in every shape” to hurt the Raja²⁹ and “lower his pride.”³⁰ A letter was sent to Ausan Singh at Murshidabad, “saying that his innocence was well-known to the Governor-General.” He was also honoured with a *khelat*

and a *doshala*.³¹ Assuring him of a favourable reception, Hastings encouraged Ausan Singh to return to Benares. On July 10, 1777, he wrote to Graham, "You will use your utmost Endeavours with the Rajah to induce him to receive Afsant Singh in the manner I have recommended him."³² On the very day, Hastings asked the Raja to receive Ausan Singh favourably or at least "to remove the Guards from his House and permit him to reside with his family unmolested."³³

The recommendation for Ausan Singh's return to Benares was neither called for by any public policy nor by any obligation to the dismissed servant of Chait Singh. This highhanded interference with the internal administration of the Raja, which was not justified by the relative position of the *zamindari* of Benares and the Bengal Government, suggests that there was in the mind of Hastings a deliberate purpose of putting Chait Singh to abject humiliation as a punishment for his siding with his "enemies" in the Council. Francis observed in his journal on the 3rd September, 1777, "By something that passed this day in the Council, I suspect that Hastings is laying the ground to torment, if not to dispossess the Rajah of Benares."³⁴ But Hastings did not want to go too far, as he specifically wrote to Graham on July 10, 1777, "It is necessary to give you a Caution that you do not attend to any Demands of Afsant Sing. If he meets with Encouragement, he will require stipulations and claim your support. You must flatly refuse to hear the fact and refer him for the last wholly to his master offering only your good offices to promote a Reconciliation."³⁵ He also told Ausan Singh that he would protect his life and honour but would say nothing regarding his being taken back into the employment.³⁶ Graham also wrote to Hastings on August 27, 1777, that he would not try to restore the former appointment to Ausan Singh.³⁷

The Bengal Government's stiff attitude was reflected in another matter. In early September, 1777, the shroffs of Benares refused to arrange for the payment of future *kists* on account of detention of their gold in the Calcutta Mint and also for high charges of coinage. The Raja was apprehensive that the difficulties caused by the bankers would be construed as a device to shirk his obligations. So he made a representation to Graham for saving him from the

prevailing misunderstanding.³⁸ On September 17, 1777, Graham just forwarded the letter of Chait Singh along with the representation of the shroffs to the Bengal Government.³⁹ But the Council did not pay any heed to the representation of the Raja, and wrote to Graham on September 29, 1777, that they would not allow "the slightest deviation from the Engagement on any account."⁴⁰ The Raja pleaded in vain that he had no intention to back out from the engagement and would carry out the orders of the Government at any cost.⁴¹ On December 1, 1777, the Council decided not to entertain any representation from Chait Singh on the matter, and the Raja was told that it was his duty to pay the fixed amount of tribute regularly into the treasury at Calcutta and it rested with him to find the means of doing it ; it was not the Company's business to see to his difficulties and "coerce the shroffs" to help him to pay the *kists*. Thus the Raja was to bear a loss of at least eighty thousand rupees per annum for circumstances over which he had no control.⁴²

However, Chait Singh could not understand the grievances of Hastings against him and also the nature of the shift in the centre of power in the Council. He wrote to Francis at the end of October, 1777, that he looked upon him as his only patron.⁴³ And, Hastings asked Chait Singh to remove his *wakil*, Maharaj Mishra, from Calcutta at the end of the year, 1777.⁴⁴ The orders were complied with. On the instigation of Graham, Hastings interfered in the internal administration of the Raja and asked Chait Singh to dismiss and banish his *dewan*, Bhai Ram.⁴⁵ By this direction, Chait Singh felt "his soul left his body", yet he unhesitatingly carried out the mandate and prayed for a letter from the Governor-General, which would convince the people that the Raja still enjoyed his favour.⁴⁶

But the forces operative both at Benares and Calcutta widened the breach. By February, 1778, Ausan Singh returned to Benares and, at the insistence of Barwell and Graham, had to be honoured by the Raja with a *khelat*.⁴⁷ His relatives were released and rehabilitated.⁴⁸ A bond of reconciliation was executed with him and the *pargana* of Saidpur in the *sarkar* of Ghazipore, yielding a yearly revenue of Rs. 65,000, was awarded to Ausan Singh.⁴⁹

Obviously, both Graham and Ausan Singh were not satisfied with the arrangement. Being patronised by Graham, Ausan Singh, once a labourer at Ramnagar,⁵⁰ expected that a monthly salary of Rs. 4,000 together with a valuable landed property would be granted to him.⁵¹ Graham struggled in vain to restore him to the post of the *dewan*.⁵² He and Barwell tried to force Chait Singh to settle the *sarkar* of Jaunpore with Ausan Singh, but the Raja did not agree to the proposal.⁵³ So, the dissatisfied Ausan Singh remained in Benares as a thorn in the Raja's flesh, and tried to hurt him in every possible way.

Taking his cue from the attitude of Hastings and "swimming with the tide," Graham treated the Raja with utmost contempt and began to fleece him by every means in his power. "About this time," Raja Amrit Singh, the ex-*dewan* and "sweetheart" of Nawab Muzaffar Jang,⁵⁴ came to Benares and tried to fish in troubled waters of Benares politics by becoming the chief adviser to Graham. He struck terror into the heart of the Raja by spreading all sorts of fantastic stories—sometimes sending word that an English fort was to be built at Ramnagar, that orders had arrived from the Governor-General to take possession of Bijaygarh and Latifpore. Amrit Singh received large sums of money from the mortified Raja for getting these orders withdrawn.⁵⁵

Aliuddin Kubra and his disciple, Zainul Abedin, the two men of nauseating disposition, who had set up as physicians and fortune-tellers in the city of Benares, were firmly established in Graham's favour.⁵⁶ They were employed by the Resident as go-between in all business with Chait Singh. The Raja was mortally afraid of these two loathsome creatures, and had to pay Rs. 800⁵⁷ per month to them for keeping Graham in good humour. But, not being satisfied with this sum, they extorted, by questionable means, thousands of rupees from the unfortunate Raja.⁵⁸

Graham employed Chait Ram, a dismissed *chobdar* of the Raja, and deliberately sent him to carry all the messages to Chait Singh.⁵⁹ He encouraged the enemies of the Raja and forwarded the letters of Rani Golab Kaur and her grandson, Mahipnarain, to Calcutta.⁶⁰

When the Raja was being thus humiliated, Sambhunath, the *munshi* of Francis Fowke, sent in the middle of March, 1778, a

completely misleading picture⁶¹ of the state of affairs in Calcutta. He gave the impression that Hastings would not be able to humble the Raja any more because of the persistent opposition of Francis and his party. Chait Singh was advised, through Sambhunath, by "these gentlemen" that he should go on acting on his own way, and pay neither any attention to the recommendations of the Governor-General nor fear him, for his enmity towards the Raja would cut no ice in the Council.⁶² The Raja was further told that Wheler expected a bribe from him for supporting his cause⁶³ and Barwell would be won over through his tout, *munshi* Sadrudin.⁶⁴

On March 18, 1778, a war broke out between Great Britain and France. On July 9, 1778, the Governor-General called upon Chait Singh, "as a subject" to the East India Company, to contribute his share to the burden of the war by establishing three regular battalions of *sepoys* under the command of the English officers. Hastings was of opinion that "it was a right inherent in every Government to impose such assessment, as it judged expedient for the common service and protection of all subjects", and the Company was not precluded from it by any engagement subsisting with the Raja.⁶⁵

Francis suggested that Chait Singh must be specifically informed that the additional subsidy would not be imposed upon him after the termination of the present war.⁶⁶ While expressing his views on the subject off the record, he wrote to Upton on July 27, 1778, "I did not approve the measure, I deemed it a breach of faith with the Rajah who holds the zamindary on the specific condition of a fixed tribute."⁶⁷ Wheler shared the official views of Francis.⁶⁸ Barwell, who regarded the military establishment of Chait Singh as a serious anomaly, strongly supported the motion on the plea that it would mark the beginning of the disbandment of the forces of the Raja and its substitution by the regular military of the Bengal Presidency.⁶⁹

A letter, conveying the resolution of the Council, was immediately despatched to Chait Singh.⁷⁰ On the 18th July, 1778, Graham presented to Chait Singh a *parwana* from the Governor-General, asking him to make a contribution to the maintenance of

the new battalions that the Company had intended to raise. The Raja wanted to plead his inability to do so, but, on the advice of Sadanand *bakhshi*, Ramchandra Sahu, Ghulam Hussain Khan and Faizullah Khan,⁷¹ sent an acknowledgement stating that he was thinking over the matter.⁷² After deep deliberation on the subject, he instructed his *wakil*, Ali Naqi, to represent at first to the Governor-General his inability to maintain the said battalions, and then to ascertain from Francis and his friends what would be the stand of the authorities in England, and finally to signify his consent to pay, if he could obtain a definite assurance of improvement of his affairs. Ali Naqi was further directed to consult Sadraddin and Raja Nabakrishna on this issue.⁷³

A section of Englishmen had been encouraging Chait Singh to postpone any commitment on the subject. Col. Alexander Dow assured Chait Singh that his grievances would be redressed by Sir Eyre Coote's joining the Council and advised him to put off the matters till his arrival.⁷⁴ On July 24, 1778, Ram Singh⁷⁵ informed the Raja of the dissatisfaction of the authorities in England with Hastings. On July 25, 1778, Sambhunath informed Chait Singh of the reinstatement of Fowke as the Resident at Benares by the authorities in England.⁷⁶

Receiving these letters, Chait Singh became elated with joy and wrote to his banished *dewan*, Bhai Ram, that no letter of recommendation from Raghunath Rao, the Maratha Chief, was necessary, as "Providence was favouring his cause." The Raja asked Sadanand *bakhshi* to keep a watch on Ausan Singh so that he might not abscond on the arrival of Fowke.⁷⁷

But things in Calcutta were not at all promising. "The Raja's friends" did not see Ali Naqi, but accepted the presents. Notwithstanding his best efforts, the *wakil* could not see the Governor-General. Barwell was, of course, contacted through his tout, Sadrudin.⁷⁸

The contact of Chait Singh with the opponents of Hastings and their advice to the Raja to procrastinate the payment of subsidy must have been reported to the Governor-General, as he observed, "I have expected evasive conduct in the Rajah, having been for sometime past well informed that he had been advised in this

manner, to procrastinate the payment of five lacs to afford time for the arrival of despatches from England.”⁷⁹

On August 17, 1778, his *wakil* at Calcutta was called upon to explain his master's policy on the question of maintaining three battalion of *sepoys*. Ali Naqi communicated that his master had authorised him to declare his acquiescence in the payment of a subsidy equal to the expenses of three battalion of *sepoys*, and suggested that the cost, for this purpose, would be three lacs of rupees. Hastings recorded the consent of the Raja to the payment of the subsidy, but fixed it at five lacs of *machhlidar* rupees, which the Raja was to pay at once to the Resident.⁸⁰ Francis, the ineffective remnant of “the majority party” in the Council, indicated that it would be less distressing for the Raja, if the amount of the subsidy was added to the monthly *kists*.⁸¹ Hastings opined, “As the Rajah's consent has been received with such Limitation and as he eluded his witten answers, the payment of subsidy ought not to be left subject of contingencies which the course of the year may produce, but immediately demanded.”⁸² Graham was asked on that very day to realise immediately the subsidy of five lacs of *machhlidar* rupees from Chait Singh.⁸³

On September 14, 1778, Graham complained to Hastings that seventeen days elapsed, since he had communicated the orders of the Government to Chait Singh, but the latter had not yet paid anything.⁸⁴ On the 20th September, Chait Singh agreed to pay the stipulated subsidy but, owing to the pecuniary distress, he prayed for being permitted to remit the same amount in five or six instalments of *sanawat* coins.⁸⁵

The Government turned down the request of the Raja and instructed the Resident on the 28th September, to demand the payment of the entire amount in *machhlidar* coins from him within five days of the communication of the orders of the Council and on the same day, Graham was written to declare “him in the name of this Government, that his evading or neglecting to accomplish payment within that span will be deemed equivalent to an absolute refusal and, in case of his not complying, you should refrain from further intercourse with him, until you shall receive further orders.”⁸⁶

But seven days before this decision of the Council i.e., on September 21, 1778, Chait Singh had paid fifty thousand rupees to Graham⁸⁷ with the intention of defraying the contribution of five lacs in five instalments.⁸⁸ In early October, Chait Singh informed the Governor-General that he had sent a bill for three lacs of rupees, bearing the figure of fish, together with the copy of a receipt of fifty thousand paid to Graham.⁸⁹ By the 10th October, 1778, the Raja completed the payment of the subsidy of five lacs and, consequently, the Council withdrew the orders of the 28th September.⁹⁰

With the payment of the subsidy of five lacs and the acceptance of the mode of it, it appears that the relations of Chait Singh with Hastings slightly improved. When atrocities were committed on a *subadar* and his party on their march through Chait Singh's country, Middleton, the British Resident at Fyzabad, wrote to the Bengal Government on September 15, 1778, to issue orders on the Raja for bringing the criminals to exemplary punishment.⁹¹ The Council on October 22, 1778, directed Graham to represent the allegation of Middleton to the Raja and to signify the Board's orders for punishing the offenders.⁹² Accordingly, Chait Singh took necessary steps. In October, 1778, Hastings assured the Raja that, if he continued to be friendly with the English, every measure would be taken to promote his interests and happiness.⁹³ The *farighkhatti* for 1777-78 was granted to him.⁹⁴ On November 9, 1778, the *khelat* was bestowed on the Raja.⁹⁵ Chait Singh sent petitions to Hastings for being restored to his power and authority, which had been suffering badly at the hands of his enemies.⁹⁶

But the prospects of the reconciliation must have been marred by the end of January, 1779. Graham visited Calcutta at the end of December, 1778, and stayed there at least up to January 18, 1779.⁹⁷ Business interests of this Resident required that the Raja's powers and authority should be curbed.⁹⁸ He must have utilised this visit to poison the ears of Hastings and thus to nip in the bud any possibility of *rapprochement* between the Raja and the Governor-General.

Moreover, intelligence reached Hastings from Ramnagar on the 28th January, 1779, that the Raja had hatched a plot to kill Ausan

Singh on January 3, 1779, and had strengthened the strategic points of his country. But, on receiving a letter from Ali Naqi that, with the joining of Eyre Coote and elevation of Francis to the position of the first member of the Council, his affairs would be satisfactorily settled, the plot was not executed.⁹⁹ This piece of information from Benares was definitely a fabrication. Chait Singh was too timid a man to take such a daring step. As a matter of fact, it was not Chait Singh who had conspired to kill Ausan Singh, but in all probability, the orthodox Brahmins and enemies of the Raja had intrigued against him by circulating a cock-and-bull story to thwart the revival of his normal relations with the Governor-General. And, in this game they succeeded.

The opponents of the Governor-General also unconsciously played the game of the enemies of the Raja. Sambhunath wrote to the Raja on January 18, 1779, that Fowke and his friends would fight out his case both in Calcutta and England. He also assured Chait Singh that his grievances would be satisfactorily redressed in a month when Coote would join the Council.¹⁰⁰ Failing to get any favourable response from Hastings, Ali Naqi attached himself to the majority party which promised to retrieve the fallen fortune of the Raja by removing Graham at an opportune moment.¹⁰¹ The oscillating *wakil* of the vacillating Raja approached the wife of the Governor-General, who promised him to get Chait Singh's affairs settled in a satisfactory manner.¹⁰²

But these hectic activities of Ali Naqi and his communications with the anti-Hastings group, which could only instil hope into the Raja without satisfying it, did more harm than good to Chait Singh. Sir Eyre Coote arrived at Calcutta on the 23rd March, 1779, and even before the 18th April, Hastings "endeavoured to gain his friendship by an official support of his pretensions, by an unreserved surrender of the military department and by other more important concessions."¹⁰³ Graham went on his own way to lodge complaints against the Raja. He reported to Hastings that the Raja was willing to restore Ausan Singh to the post of the *dewan*, if he severed all connections with the English. The Resident further alleged that Chait Singh had been carrying on correspondence with the Maratha chiefs and would break off at the first news of any

English reverse.¹⁰⁴ Graham wrote to his Government that he had obtained the 4th *kist*, falling due on May 4, 1779, "not without Trouble."¹⁰⁵ On May 25, 1779, Graham reported to the Council "From the Tenor of the Rajah's Behaviour in the discharge of the *kist* which I have just received, I have no reason to expect that he will assist the necessities of the Company by making an advance on his Tribute."¹⁰⁶ Chait Singh, of course, continued to profess loyalty, and hoped that the Governor-General would consider him his loyal subject and should not give credit to any false report that mischief mongers might make to the latter.¹⁰⁷

Asafuddaula sent a prayer to Hastings in June, 1779, for resorting the territories of Chait Singh to him on an annual revenue of 35 lacs of rupees. It appears that Hastings did not reply ; but he would have complied with the request, had the Nawab been a bit more competent.¹⁰⁸

On July 19, 1779, Hastings proposed, as the war with France was still continuing, Chait Singh should pay the subsidy of five lacs of *machhlidar* rupees towards his contribution to the present war.¹⁰⁹ On the same day, it was notified to Graham that the year, for which the Raja had made his payment, would expire on the 19th August, and he would, therefore, realise the subsidy of the current year from Chait Singh.¹¹⁰

When Graham asked Chait Singh to pay his subsidy on the basis of the letter of the Governor-General, the Raja pleaded his inability to pay. The Resident did not consider the answer of the Raja definitive and continued to demand the same.¹¹¹ Chait Singh sent a prayer to the Governor-General, in a very submissive tone, for excusing him from the payment of the subsidy.¹¹²

On August 26, 1779, a resolution, supported by Hastings, Barwell and Coote and, objected to by Francis and Wheler, was passed to the effect that the Commander-in-Chief should be requested to direct the commanding officer at Danapore to send two battalions of troops at the requisition of the Resident at Benares.¹¹³ Francis loudly protested, "I am afraid that it will be attended with consequences ruinous to the Rajah and to his country ; that country is one of the richest jewels that we possess."¹¹⁴ Hastings sharply retorted that "Benares is not a jewel in our possession, if

you leave the Rajah an option to obey or disobey the orders of his superior Government.”¹¹⁵

On the very day, Graham was asked to realise the subsidy of five lacs from Chait Singh and was authorised to call two battalions of troops from Danapore to intimidate him.¹¹⁶ On September 2, 1779, Graham informed the Government that he had repeated the demand every second or third day, but he got the same answer from the Raja that he did not have the means to pay.¹¹⁷ He wrote to the Council, “I have used every argument in my power to convince him that as a subject it was his Duty inseparable from his allegiance to afford every assistance, it might require, whilst it was engaged in war and Denial under such circumstances was never admitted of.”¹¹⁸

On September 10, 1779, Chait Singh agreed to pay the subsidy of five lacs but, the sum being considerable, he prayed for permission to make payment of the amount in five monthly instalments.¹¹⁹

Hastings paid no heed to the representation of the Raja as he was convinced that Chait Singh had the means to pay and was deliberately protracting, if not entirely evading, the payment of the subsidy required for the expenses of the war. He advised Graham on September 29, 1779, “We are of opinion that compulsory means should be immediately used to oblige him to discharge it.”¹²⁰

Before the communication of this mandate, Chait Singh had heard that force would be used against him. He, therefore, paid one lac of rupees on the 17th October.¹²¹ The Danapore Regiment, under the command of Capt. Crabb, arrived at Benares on the 19th October, and encamped near the Raja’s palace. Chait Singh immediately made another payment amounting to one lac fifty thousand, and by the 21st October, paid the full subsidy of five lacs.¹²² The Raja was forced to pay twenty thousand rupees on October 26, 1779, as the expenses of the detachment stationed at Ramnagar to fleece himself.¹²³

A person bearing the name of Sadasiva Bhau, the historic name of Raghunath Rao’s brother who met his death on the battlefield of Panipath, came to live in the city of Benares in early 1779. He collected more than one thousand followers in Benares and caused some disturbances.¹²⁴ Graham directed the Raja to seize Bhau,

hoping that, if in the ensuing scuffle the pretender was killed, the reputation of the Raja would suffer. After a skirmish, the Raja's troops succeeded in capturing him alive late at night on August 31, 1779, and presented him to Graham who accordingly sought the advice of the Governor-General as to how the captive should be dealt with.¹²⁵

The Council opined on October 25, 1779, that Sadasiva Rao Bhau should be tried by the Criminal Court of the Raja for creating disturbances in Benares.¹²⁶ But, on the advice of Graham, the Bengal Government decided to keep him confined within the fort of Chunar and he was accordingly sent there.¹²⁷

Graham charged Ghulam Hussain Khan with misappropriation of Bhau's money. The Khan met Graham and swore his innocence. In the course of his talks with Ghulam Hussain Khan, Graham frankly told him that, considering what had happened to Shuja-uddaula with such extensive resources, it was impossible that Chait Singh could be saved and that the day was not far off when the whole of India would pass into the hands of the British.¹²⁸ The Khan wanted to know what the fault of his master was, but did not get any reply. He read the mind of Graham, and the attitude of Hastings towards the Raja also became crystal clear to him.¹²⁹ The Khan went straight to the Raja. Giving a clear picture of the shape of things to come, he advised Chait Singh to proceed to Calcutta at once to plead his case with the Governor-General and to resign power and authority, if he found that Hastings was adamant in his stand.¹³⁰ But Chait Singh was too timid to take such a daring move. The mother of the Raja also discouraged him from taking such an adventurous course.¹³¹

Eyre Coote's journey to Benares in early December, 1779, was utilised by Graham and his stooges for intimidating and fleecing the Raja.¹³² It was given out that the object of the Commander-in-Chief's visit was to chastise the Raja.¹³³ Being awfully frightened, the Raja sent off his family and valuables to Latifpore and Bijaygarh. He deputed his brother, Sujan Singh, Sadanand *bakhshi* and others to receive Coote on his way to Awadh. But his mind having been poisoned by Graham, the General refused to see the deputation.¹³⁴ Through the good offices of Vansittart, the Persian

interpreter of the Commander-in-Chief, Coote agreed to meet Chait Singh at Ghazipore. He also paid a visit to Ramnagar. But it did not improve the degraded position of the Raja in the least. Coote demanded one lac of rupees from him, on behalf of Major Munro. The Raja had to spend more than two lacs, on this occasion, in his endeavour to win the goodwill of Coote, but all was in vain. Coote remained equally ill-disposed towards him even after exacting one lac of rupees on a flimsy pretext.¹³⁵ He reported to Hastings on December 2, 1779, that the Raja had a large army and had been fortifying the strategic places inside his country. He also complained that Chait Singh had no respect for the English authority.¹³⁶ In replying to this letter, Hastings opened his mind to Coote on December 18, 1779. He was apprehensive not only of an under-hand alliance between Francis and the Raja, but also of the ferment which Chait Singh would create in England. He commented that Chait Singh would do more mischief by exciting the spirit of discord there than by secret machinations or by "even open revolt here."¹³⁷

On February 27, 1780,¹³⁸ as a part of his understanding with Francis, Hastings appointed Fowke in place of Graham in accordance with the orders of the Court of Directors.¹³⁹

With the coming of Fowke in March, 1780, the hirelings of Graham lost their occupation and "the bazar of the enemies and backbiters" of the Raja became very dull.¹⁴⁰ Though the Raja heaved a sign of relief, Fowke was not hopeful about his survival. The new Resident impressed upon him the gravity of the situation and advised him to visit Calcutta personally or to depute some trustworthy agents without delay.¹⁴¹

In May, 1780, Chait Singh sent faithful Sadanand *bakhshi* to Calcutta with a letter, in which he promised loyalty and obedience to the Governor-General and a compliance with his orders, on the one hand, and in which he prayed for the redress of his grievances, on the other.¹⁴² It appears from the notes of Hastings¹⁴³ that Sadanand proposed, the subsidy of five lacs should not be repeated, the Resident's power should be restricted to the collection of yearly revenue only and Ausan Singh should be handed over to the Raja. It is obvious that those terms were rejected by Hastings. The

deputation paid two lacs of rupees to Hastings as presentation, which was accepted by him.¹⁴⁴

The net outcome of the mission of Sadanand is a matter of controversy. Hastings wrote in his Narrative, "I accepted his excuses and promised him an oblivion of all that passed exceptionable in his conduct and my future protection."¹⁴⁵ But the subsequent events indicate that there was no reconciliation and the Raja incurred a fruitless expenditure of three lacs of rupees.¹⁴⁶

On June 15, 1780, the question of subsidy was discussed in the Council. Francis and Wheler objected to the demand of five lacs on the ground that this particular contribution was not specifically spent for war efforts, but was appropriated "in the general estimate of the revenue."¹⁴⁷ On June 22, the Council resolved, as the war had been continuing, the Raja should contribute his subsidy of five lacs for the current year.¹⁴⁸ On the same day, the orders of the Government were communicated to Chait Singh.¹⁴⁹ Chait Singh paid two instalments by the middle of September, 1780,¹⁵⁰ and asked his banker, Kashmiri Mal, to pay the rest. The banker was then passing through pecuniary stringency and was unable to make the payment.¹⁵¹ Fowke reported the matter to the Council which on October 19, 1780, directed him to demand instant payment of the balance of the subsidy.¹⁵² On his making delay, the Resident was asked to call out the army, stationed "nearest to Benares," and impose a fine of one lac of rupees.¹⁵³ A letter was despatched to Brig. Stibbert, directing him to send troops to Benares immediately.¹⁵⁴ On October 20, 1780, Stibbert asked Crawford, the officer commanding the 35th battalion of *sepoys* at Danapore, and Tottingham, officer commanding at Chunar, to proceed towards Benares.¹⁵⁵ But before the march of the troops actually began, Chait Singh had paid off the subsidy to the last farthing on the 7th October, 1780, and the orders had to be countermanded.¹⁵⁶

In July, 1780, Captain Isaac Eaton, the commanding officer stationed at Buxar, had deputed some *sepoys* to procure grain from a village, situated near the boundary of Chait Singh's territory. It was alleged that Mir Safdar Ali, the *faujdar* of Balia, abused and attacked the *sepoys* and, as a result, a *subahdar* lost his life.¹⁵⁷ Coote wrote to the Resident at Benares on August 3, 1780, "The Merit or

Demerit of the sepoys is a matter which is not now in point ; admitting that they misbehaved, the conduct of the Foujdar merits the severest punishment.”¹⁵⁸ Fowke approached the Raja for issuing a *parwana* on Mir Safdar Ali. The Raja was at first hesitant for, in his opinion, the *sepoys* were the aggressors.¹⁵⁹ He, however, issued the necessary *parwana* on Safdar Ali, but did nothing else.¹⁶⁰

On November 14, 1780, three English gentlemen, Irwin, Horne and Basset, were humiliated by the people of the village of Barpur, in the *pargana* of Narainpore, situated in the territory of Chait Singh.¹⁶¹ Three of their servants were killed and their belongings were looted at the instigation of the *jamadar* of the place. The *zamindar* of Narainpore also prevented the shopkeepers from sending provisions for the English detachment at Buxar.¹⁶² Eaton wrote to the Council on November 16, 1780, “Outrages of this kind are perpetrated in almost every village of Rajah Cheyt Sing’s country. This need be ended.”¹⁶³

The Bengal Government on December 14, 1780, directed the Raja to use his authority in seizing the *faujdar* of Balia and the *jamadar* of Narainpore and also to institute a strict enquiry into their conduct in the presence of the Resident.¹⁶⁴ The Raja was told specifically that, if the offenders were not punished, he would be held responsible.¹⁶⁵

On November 2, 1780, the Council authorised Hastings to write to Chait Singh, requiring him to supply such part of the cavalry in his employ as he could spare for the service of the Government during the period of the present war.¹⁶⁶ Accordingly, Hastings wrote to the Raja for ascertaining the number of troops he could lend for the assistance of the Company.¹⁶⁷ On January 7, 1781, came the Raja’s reply that he could spare only 250 horse.¹⁶⁸

Before anything could be done in this matter, Hastings removed Fowke, whom he never considered his own agent, from the Residency of Benares. On January 14, 1781, he opined, “While he continues at Benares, he stands a Screen between the Rajah and this Government, instead of an instrument of controul, (sic) and that the Rajah himself and every Chief in Hindustan, with whom we are in connection, will regard it as the pledge and foundation of his

Independence.”¹⁶⁹ William Markham, a son of Hastings’s old friend,¹⁷⁰ was to succeed Fowke who was given the agency for boats with “an allowance of a commission of 15 per cent on all disbursements.” John Benn was appointed the assistant to the Resident at Benares. As the new appointment of Fowke was to take effect after three months, he was permitted to draw his salary for the interim period.¹⁷¹

It is interesting to note that, at a time of financial stringency, Hastings made the exchequer bear the salary of two Residents at Benares for three months.¹⁷² The appointment of one who had been under the patronage of Wheler is also significant. As Hastings observed, “I adopted him (if I may so express myself) from his family and Patronage and assigned him an office of the highest trust near my own Person, with Mr. Wheler’s approbation and from a foresight of the event, which has since made us Copartners of this Government and which suggested to me the propriety of employing such agents as would be agreeable to him while they possessed the other requisites for my own confidence.”¹⁷³

Markham arrived at Benares on January 17, 1781. The arrival of the new Resident was a mishap for Chait Singh. Markham, who was as prejudiced and hostile against the Raja as Graham, was even more dangerous and harmful, because he was not likely to change his attitude “for something”. As he enjoyed the full confidence and support of both Hastings and Wheler, “his little finger” was “thicker than the thigh of Mr. Graham in his conduct towards the Raja.” Aliuddin Kubra and other enemies of Chait Singh now got the best opportunity to humiliate him.¹⁷⁴ Hastings asked the Raja to send 200 *sepoys* to attend on the person of the Resident and to bear the expenses of the same. Chait Singh complied with the orders. Markham wrote to Hastings on February 10, 1781, “If you think proper, an officer may be appointed to command them as they may be useful at some future period, if taught the European discipline.”¹⁷⁵

Markham also took up the question of supplying two thousand cavalry. The demand on Chait Singh was subsequently reduced to one thousand horse. The Raja consented to furnish a contingent of 500 horse and 500 matchlockmen and raised *the corps which

were to be led by Haji Najaf Ali Khan and Kabulimal Sardar. According to Ghulam Hussain Khan, the Government did not make any arrangement for taking delivery of the same.¹⁷⁶

Hastings had already made up his mind for bringing about some drastic change in the status of the Raja. As early as December, 1779, he wrote to Coote that, had Asafuddaula been competent, he would have restored the territories of Chait Singh to the Nawab.¹⁷⁷ In January, 1781, he asked the Raja to pay up all his arrears within 24 hours after the receipt of this ultimatum or prepare himself to meet the consequences.¹⁷⁸ In April, 1781, he wrote to Scott "Something, too, will be required at Benares and something more than I shall dare to attempt ; for if it were left to my option, I would restore that Zemindarry to the Nabob of Oude ; Either that ought to be done or the Rajah reduced to the condition of a Zemindar".¹⁷⁹

On July 3, 1781, Hastings was invested with full power and authority to form an "arrangement with the Rajah of Benares for better Government of the Zamindarry".¹⁸⁰ Hastings, accompanied from Danapur by Durgvijayi Singh, the father of Mahipnarain, arrived at Buxar on the 13th August. Chait Singh, who had been waiting at Buxar with a large number of retainers, paid his respects to the Governor-General in a public audience. Afterwards, the Raja sought him alone and made an abject submission. Hastings told him that he had nothing to fear. Khairuddin writes, "After the Rajah had taken his leave, God knows what Mr. Markham and Ali-ood-deen told the Governor-General ; but in the evening, when the Rajah's servants appeared bearing presents he ordered them to be returned" and he proceeded on from Buxar next day.¹⁸¹ On the river, the Raja tried to gain his sympathy with rolling tears, but failed to move Hastings.¹⁸²

On August 14, Hastings reached Benares.¹⁸³ Under the advice of Markham, Ausan Singh and other enemies of the Raja were sent for and admitted to the presence of the Governor-General. Chait Singh made several attempts to pay his respects to Hastings, but at the instigation of Ausan Singh and Aliuddin Kubra, the Governor-General refused to grant him an interview. He went away shedding tears. His men advised him to return to Ramnagar and send his

family to the forts. But the Raja did not listen to the advice and wished to stay at Benares till the end.¹⁸⁴

On the 15th August, Hastings intimated to the Raja, through Markham, several instances of his contumacy. The Raja was charged with delay in the payment of subsidy of five lacs, with the failure to furnish 2000 horse and with the incompetency to maintain law and order in his *zamindari*.¹⁸⁵

On the evening of the same day, Chait Singh denied the first two allegations in a most submissive manner and promised to improve law and order in future. The Raja called himself a slave of the Governor-General and wrote, "My Enemies with a view to ruin me, have made false representations to you".¹⁸⁶

Hastings judged the answer "not only unsatisfactory in substance, but offensive in style", and considered it 'as a strong indication of that spirit of Independency which the Rajah had for some years past assumed'.¹⁸⁷

On the nightfall of the 15th August, Ausan Singh, Aliuddin Kubra and other enemies of Chait Singh saw Hastings and impressed upon him that the Raja was totally unnerved and that one crore of rupees could be squeezed out of him easily by nominal pressure. Hastings fell into the snare¹⁸⁸ and directed Markham at 10 p.m. to repair to the Raja next morning and put him under arrest; on his refusal, Markham was asked to wait till the arrival of two companies of *sepoys*, belonging to Major Popham's detachment, who had been directed to follow and assist Markham.¹⁸⁹

On the morning of the 16th August, Markham, accompanied by Lieut. Stalker and a few orderlies, went to Shivalaghat. The Raja submitted quietly to the arrest¹⁹⁰ and assured the Resident that whatever might be the orders of the Governor-General, he would readily obey. He also told the Resident that he was prepared to lay his forts and treasures at the feet of Hastings.¹⁹¹ After a quarter of an hour of this conversation, Lieut. Scott arrived with two companies of *sepoys*. All servants of Chait Singh were disarmed and only a few attendants were permitted to wait on the Raja. He was now under the custody of Stalker and Scott. He wrote two frantic appeals, couched in most submissive language, to Hastings who

asked him to set his mind at ease and promised to send necessary instructions, through Markham, in the evening.¹⁹²

The news of the arrest of the Raja by the British Resident spread like wild fire and inflamed the people. A large number of armed men from different quarters rushed to Shivalaghat to rescue the Raja from humiliation. Sadanand *bakhshi*, with great patience and tact, succeeded in keeping the extreme sections of the mob under restraint. But the crowd went out of control, when Chait Ram, a dismissed mace-bearer, who had been sent with a message from Markham to Chait Singh, behaved insolently.¹⁹³ The insolent *chobdar*, Chait Ram, and the despicable Maulvi, Zainul Abedin, were hacked to pieces.¹⁹⁴ Of the two companies of *sepoys*, few remained alive. The fate of another company of *sepoys* under Burell was not different. More than two hundred *sepoys* in all lost their lives on the spot. The bodies of the three commanding officers, Stalker, Scott and Symes lay within a small distance of each other, mangled and without any sign of life.¹⁹⁵

In the midst of tumultuous confusion, Chait Singh found means to escape through a wicket which extended up to the Ganga. The banks being exceedingly steep in that place, he let himself down by turbans tied together into a boat which brought him to the other side of the river.¹⁹⁶

On the first intelligence of this commotion, Hastings directed Popham to march instantly, with the remainder of the detachment, to the support of the besieged party. Arriving at the spot, Popham found that it had been entirely evacuated by the Raja's supporters and only the dead and the wounded had been lying.¹⁹⁷

Chait Singh left Ramnagar that very midnight and went to Latifpore. He was accompanied by his brother, Sujan Singh, and Maniyar Singh. It was wrongly rumoured that the Raja had taken precaution by forcing Rani Golab Kaur and her grandson, Mahip-narain, a contestant for the *zamindari*, to accompany him to Latifpore.¹⁹⁸

Chait Singh having fled away, Hastings made a choice of Ausan Singh to administer the country in the capacity of a *naib*. To this effect, proclamation and necessary *parwanas* were issued. To enforce law and order, Hastings ordered the battalion of *sepoys* from Chunar,

the remainder of Popham's detachment from Mirzapore, and a regiment of *sepoys* from Danapore to march immediately to Benares.

On August 19, 1781, a large force arrived at Benares from Mirzapore under the command of Capt. Mayaffre. Blair, with his battalion, and Mayaffre, with the remainder of Popham's detachment, were ordered to assemble for an attack on Ramnagar. Major Popham was expected to join and conduct the operations according to a concerted plan. But Mayaffre did not wait for Popham and marched towards Ramnagar on the morning of the 20th. The people of Rannagar offered a unique resistance. The army was entangled in the narrow streets and had to suffer a disastrous defeat. Mayaffre, the senior commanding officer, 33 rangers and 103 soldiers lost their lives in the military operations. The English army lost 2 guns, one howitzer and innumerable arms and ammunitions. Blair somehow managed to flee to Chunar.¹⁹⁹

After this disastrous failure at Ramnagar, Hastings found it unsafe to stay at Benares with 400 *sepoys*.²⁰⁰ The whole bank of the Ganga was lined with armed men who boarded and fired upon all boats indiscriminately.²⁰¹ All those who had least connection with the English were tortured and harassed.²⁰² From Patna to Allahabad, roads were closed and all communications cut off.²⁰³ On the bank of the Karamnassa, Bechut Ray, with 200 horse, 4000 peons and 6 companies of *sepoys* carrying 4 guns, was ready to oppose any communication with the Governor-General.²⁰⁴ Hastings fled to Chunar in the thick of midnight of the 21st²⁰⁵ and reached his destination on the 22nd at daybreak.²⁰⁶ The army, left at Benares, followed suit on August 23, 1781,²⁰⁷ leaving the city at the hands of Chait Singh's supporters. "For some days, the roads were so closely guarded that birds could hardly fly across them".²⁰⁸

Thus, on his arrival at Chunar, Hastings had to face a critical situation. As he wrote on October 13, 1781, "On my arrival at Chunar, I found myself in great and immediate distress for money, the troops were some four and five months in arrears and as Cheit Sing had the country on all sides at his devotion, I had not the smallest prospect of obtaining supplies, until the actions of our troops from different quarters should open a communication".²⁰⁹

All lines of communication between Patna and the United Provinces were cut off.²¹⁰ Hastings was virtually isolated from the eastern provinces. As Captain Noakes, commander of a battalion in Major Crawford's regiment at Buxar, on his way to Benares, wrote to Capt. Hawkesley Hall at Danapore on August 25, 1781, "I fear much that there no assistance can arrive at Chun Ghur from any other place, but Futteh Ghur and Cawnpore".²¹¹

Ausan Singh, Durgvijayi Singh, the son-in-law of late Balwant Singh, and his son, Mahipnarain, came to live in the fort of Chunar with the Governor-General.²¹² Beni Ram Pandit, the *wakil* of Mudhoji Bhonsla, who had been with Hastings at Benares, came to Chunar, attended by a single servant.²¹³

Hastings obtained a small sum of Rs. 25,000 from the attendants and distributed it among the *sepoys*.²¹⁴ Beni Ram Pandit procured with great difficulty one lac of rupees for the Governor-General.²¹⁵ Lieut. Polhill arrived at Chunar on August 27, 1781, and "freed the lines of communication with the opposite shore." He procured 5,000 maunds of grain from an adjoining village by routing a force of 150 horse, 2 companies of *sepoys* and more than 2,000 matchlockmen.²¹⁶ Commanders with their detachments began to pour into Chunar from different quarters such as Buxar, Danapore, Kanpur and Allahabad through less frequented routes. On September 3, 1781, Popham sent Blair with two battalions and two companies of his grenadiers and 2 guns (6 pounders) to attack the Raja's forces, concentrated at Patita.²¹⁷ Blair was opposed by about 4000 armed men who offered a spirited resistance. Hastings admitted in his letter to Wheler on September 4, 1781, "It is remarkable that the enemy's artillery and carriages made at Ramnagar are almost equal to ours. Their cartridges and post fires compounded with equal skill and their powder much better."²¹⁸ Blair's bold but well-judged manoeuvre turned the scale in favour of the English forces which earned a "dear but decisive" victory. The soldiers of the Raja were routed; their (four) guns, tumbrils and "unmeasurable" ammunitions were seized.²¹⁹ Two big guns on the flank were silenced. The losses of the English were also heavy; more than 105 of Blair's men met instant death.²²⁰

Many guides presented themselves in the nick of time. Nanda

Lal, the *wakil* of Ram Jivan, the *kotwal* of Ramnagar, who had left his master in anger, offered to take the troops to Patita and Bandhu Khan, a *piadah* living in Chunar, offered, on the promise of a reward, to lead the English troops by a jungle road to the fort of Bijaygarh.²²¹ On the advice of the guides, Popham decided to launch operations against Patita and Latispore.²²²

Major Crabb marched in the midnight of September 15, 1781, towards Latispore through an almost intractable route. The army consisted of the first battalion of the 6th regiment, the 7th regiment, and the entire battalion commanded by Lieut. Polhill. The army was well equipped with fire arms and ammunitions and had six-pounders and one 5½-inch howitzer.²²³ The mountainous tracts were so high and rough that the guns could not be driven by bullocks and had to be carried by soldiers. After a march for three days, the contingent reached the pass of Sukroot, which stood on the way both to Patita and Bijaygarh. The army arrived at Losa, a place above the fort of Latispore. The deep-laid secrecy, with which the expedition was undertaken, and the unfrequented route, through which the army marched, totally unnerved the Raja's 2,000-strong force, which suffered a crushing defeat and had to disperse in different directions.²²⁴ The Raja's party lost about 200 soldiers, 3 guns and plenty of arms and ammunitions. The British success in the battle of Losa paved the way for the conquest of Latispore. The Raja fled away from Latispore towards Bijaygarh in the evening of the 20th September.²²⁵ On the morning of the 21st September, Crabb took possession of the pass above the fortress and on the very day, the fort of Latispore was occupied without least opposition.²²⁶

On September 16, Popham with the 19th, 30th and 35th regiments, two companies of European infantry, the corps of rangers and 30 artillery, including six pounders, two 8½-inch howitzers and 8-inch mortar²²⁷, advanced towards Patita. The fort was situated on a rock, surrounded by impenetrable jungles and deep ditches.²²⁸ Four of the Raja's principal *sardars* with five thousand foot and one thousand horse were stationed there.²²⁹ When the English army reached the ground below the hills of Patita, the defenders fired shells. But European grenadiers and light infantry,* which Popham

had kept as a reserve force, advanced²³⁰ towards them and routed them.²³¹

The Raja's cavalry, at the same time, made some motions with a section of the infantry on the right flank of the English army, but a constant firing of the guns obliged them to disperse.²³² On the 18th. Popham reached Patita and found it necessary to erect a battery of eighteen pounders. This being done, proper breaches were effected on the 19th and, on the morning of the 20th, the place was stormed by grenadiers.²³³ Major Robert's men attacked the fort from another direction. The forces of Chait Singh fled away and evacuated the fort in utter confusion. They left all their armaments behind and took away only their baggages with them. The fort of Patita was captured on the 20th September, 1781.²³⁴

At the news of the unbroken success of the English, the alarm of the followers of the Raja was so great and their demoralisation so complete that Major Balfour could easily capture Ramnagar on the 22nd September, 1781.²³⁵

Chait Singh reached Bijaygarh by an unfrequented route on the morning of the 21st September.²³⁶ After having given some instructions to the *killadar*, he left his family at Bijaygarh²³⁷ and fled to Agoree, a fort in the border of his country. Major Crawford chased him and on September 29, captured Agoree.²³⁸ But, by this time, Chait Sing had left his *zamindari* with the intention of taking shelter in the country of Bundelkhand. Thus were foiled all attempts to seize the person of the Raja.²³⁹

On the evening of the 25th September, Hastings left Chunar for Ramnagar.²⁴⁰ But the fort of Bijaygarh was still in the hands of the partisans of the Raja. The Raja's mother, wife and many of his principal dependants were in the fort which was situated on a rock, so exceedingly steep that it was difficult to ascend.²⁴¹ Popham wrote to Hastings on the 19th October, "If the assailed would act resolutely, next to impossible would be endeavours to capture the fort".²⁴²

From October 8, preparations were afoot for the conquest of Bijaygarh. On October 16, two batteries were opened at the fort from a distance of about five hundred yards. One of the four 6-pounders, two 5½-inch howitzers, one 8-inch mortar and two 8-inch

howitzers were also fixed aiming at the fort, and the English army began to fire and throw shells.²⁴³

As spies were unable to obtain an access to the fort, the extent of loss could not be determined.²⁴⁴ The Raja's mother started negotiations which, however, could not mature, as her terms were exorbitant.²⁴⁵

Two 18-pounders had opened volleys on the fort, but the walls of Bijaygarh proved too strong for any breach being done. The Rani's men made a futile attempt to destroy the English batteries from the woods.²⁴⁶

In order to encourage Popham and his officials, Hastings wrote to him, "I should be very sorry that your officers and soldiers lost any part of the reward to which they are so well entitled."²⁴⁷ On November 3, 1781, Hastings told Popham, "It will be your part to secure the fort and the property for the benefit of yourself and detachment."²⁴⁸

All-out endeavours of the English army notwithstanding, no substantial breaches could be made in the walls of the fort.²⁴⁹ Popham had to start negotiations for the surrender of the fort of Bijaygarh. The terms were finally settled in the night of the 9th November.²⁵⁰ The Rani was permitted to hold fifteen per cent of the property of the fort and was allowed to be escorted to any place she wished to go to.²⁵¹

With the occupation of Bijaygarh, peace and tranquillity came to be restored to the *zamindari* of Benares, which now became a part of the expanding British dominion in India.

Popham and his officers seized the remaining property inside the fort and distributed the same among the troops.²⁵² Hastings was definitely annoyed with such termination of the siege of Bijaygarh, because he was averse from doing anything "Out of Tenderness for the women". On October 25, 1781, Hastings wrote to Macpherson, "I have desired him to proceed to Extremities. If they suffer by it, it is their own fault".²⁵³ Moreover, the appropriation of the prize money by Popham and his army was not after Hastings's liking. The motive of Hastings, underlying all operations against Chait Singh, was to exact money; before the insurrection, he was determined to impose a fine of fifty lacs on the Raja, and

after the insurrection, he desired to confiscate the entire wealth of the Raja.²⁵⁴ But when the war thus came to an end through the negotiations of Popham, it brought no immediate financial advantage, but "loaded it with fresh debts".²⁵⁵

The armed opposition of the people of Benares province to the British high-handedness, though spasmodic in nature, ceased to be a local affair and produced far and wide repercussions in the adjacent provinces. The feudal aristocracy in Bihar, which was dissatisfied with the English administration, found a godsend opportunity to give vent to the personal grievances at a time when the prestige of the English sank low, following the disturbances at Shivalaghat. The *zamindars* like Raj Narain Singh of Siris and Kutumba, Fateh Sahi of Hathwa, Raja Akbar Ali of Nurhat and Samoy, Mitarjit Singh of Tikari and Madhoo Singh of Tirhut, who had all either been displaced from respective *zamindaries* or kept in confinement, bore ill will against the English authorities and took advantage of the distractions of the English.²⁵⁶

On August 29, 1781, Grome, the collector of Saran, informed Ross, the Acting Chief at Patna, that there were many dissatisfied people in his division. Many inhabitants of that district, particularly the Ujjains, a Rajput tribe, were sincerely attached to Chait Singh. Pitambar Singh of the family of the Tikari Raj was intimately connected with Chait Singh.²⁵⁷ Fateh Sahi, the rebel chief of Hathwa, collected about fifteen hundred men and espoused the cause of the Raja of Benares.²⁵⁸ In the Shahabad district, several sections of the partisans of Chait Singh stood prepared at different stations. The forests of Dildarnagar were infested with crowds of supporters of Chait Singh. They were a vast multitude of untrained men and had more than 400 camels at their disposal.²⁵⁹ Hussain Ali Khan, the renter of Arwal-Musauree, was found propagating the cause of Chait Singh.²⁶⁰

In face of this challenge, Ross issued necessary orders to Major Hardy, the commander of a militia, to collect as many people as possible.²⁶¹ On August 30, 1781, Ross issued orders to "seize and take up every person against whom we can obtain least suspicion of being disaffected to the Company's interests".²⁶² The renter of Arwal-Musauree was arrested.²⁶³ Fateh Sahi had to flee away to

the dominion of the Nawab of Awadh.²⁶⁴ Villages of Dildarnagar, which had been the dens of the disaffected people, were burnt with a view to striking terror in the heart of others. Activities of Bhup Narain Singh of Jagdishpur in Shahabad were closely watched.²⁶⁵

More serious resistance was offered by Narain Singh, the *zamindar* of Siris-Kutumba. When Major James Crawford began his march, in the last week of August, 1781, from Ramgarh with his army in order to join the other English forces at Buxar, Narain Singh was directed to provide the English army with boats for crossing the Sone. Instead of helping the English, Narain Singh fled towards the jungle where he collected a large body of matchlockmen to oppose the advance of the English forces. Crawford, however, changed his route and advanced via Rohtas. At Maraba, Bechu Singh, a *faujdar* of Chait Singh, joined Narain Singh with a force estimated at 1500-strong. The Agroor pass was occupied by the combined forces of Bechu Singh and Narain Singh. Narain Singh stood at the foot of the pass with 1500 matchlockmen to oppose the march of the English troops. Hearing this, Crawford further changed his route, advanced towards Cowrah pass, and occupied it. The rebels were left to dominate the areas for sometime. After the British occupation of the province of Benares, military operations were started and Narain Singh was arrested in May, 1782, and consequently, deported to Dacca.²⁶⁶

Raja Akbar Ali Khan of Nurhat-Samoy, who had been confined to Patna for arrears of rent, managed to escape on the news of the outbreak of the disturbances in Benares. He went to his *zamindari* of Nurhat-Samoy, raised a body of 4000 or 5000 matchlockmen and began to plunder the adjacent areas. On October 13, 1781, a company of troops was sent against him, but it proved ineffective. Col. Ahmuty despatched two companies of soldiers under Capt. Powell who routed Akbar Ali Khan and forced him to flee to the hills of Kharackpore in the district of Monghyr.²⁶⁷

The humiliation of the Raja of Benares at the hands of Hastings evoked at once Awadh's sympathy for the Raja and protest against the Governor-General. The town of Fyzabad had more the appearance of belonging to Chait Singh than to the Nawab. It was

clear, if the English met with a check at Benares, "everyman" was ready to fall upon the scattered British camps. The forts of Gorukhpore, Balia and Dumriganje were occupied by the rebel *zamindars* from the *amils* of the Nawab. The insurrection spread throughout the whole kingdom of Awadh, though it raged more violently in the *mahals* of Sultanpore, Khairabad, Koonry and Sylack, as also in the *mahals* from Fyzabad to Benares, and those on the eastern side of the Gogra. There were signs of disaffection in Shahjehanpore, Rohilkhand, Kora and the Doab. Jawahar Ali Khan and Bahar Ali Khan, the favourite eunuchs of the Begams of Awadh, were charged by the Resident with fomenting disturbances. It was alleged that the Begams of Awadh also actively supported the cause of Chait Singh.²⁶⁸ The spirit of defiance to the English authority received a crushing blow, when Naylor inflicted a severe defeat on 10,000 rebels at Sakrora on the morning of October 8, 1781.²⁶⁹ Hannay and Naylor with great vigour suppressed the spirit of rebellion in Gorakhpur and adjacent areas.

If we analyse the tragedy which overtook the fate of Chait Singh, certain things become clear. It was indeed a misfortune of Chait Singh that, when his kingdom passed under the suzerainty of the English East India Company, the supreme Council at Fort William was sharply divided into two hostile factions and the group of Clavering, Monson and Francis enjoyed an upper hand and, as a matter of necessity, the Raja had to depend on them. The majority soon turned into a minority, but, even then, Francis and his friends kept the Raja in a fool's paradise by kindling a hope in him that the Court of Directors was coming to his rescue. But, in the hour of crisis, the promise of Francis and his friends did not come to the rescue of the Raja who was shamelessly sacrificed to the hatred, malice and anger of Hastings. When the consolation came from the Court of Directors on April 30, 1782,²⁷⁰ the game was already played—it was too late to mend.

Chait Singh certainly delayed and hesitated to pay the enhanced demands of the English Company, but this did not mean that he was aiming at an independence status ; servile to the tips of his finger, he was incapable of thinking in such terms even in his dreams. It will be evident from the activities of Chait Singh after

the incident of Shivalaghat, when Hastings had been directing military operations against him. Sujan Singh's plan of a nocturnal attack on the garden of Madhoda to capture the person of Hastings was foiled by Ghulam Hussain Khan, showing him the Raja's letter that Ausan Singh should be resisted, but that no harm or insult be done to the Governor-general.²⁷¹ Barnet, a European businessman of Benares, who had been captured by the forces of Chait Singh, was requested by the Raja to plead his case with the Governor-General.²⁷² Immediately after the retreat of Hastings to Chunar, the Raja was advised by his officers to march against the Governor-General, but he ignored the advice.²⁷³ When Asafuddaula reached Benares, Chait Singh sent envoys, requesting him to take up his cause.²⁷⁴ On September 21, 1781, the house of Daya Ram, the brother of banished Bhai Ram, was searched and some *parwanas* written by Chait Singh were discovered. In one of the *parwanas*, Chait Singh asked Daya Ram to inform him when Asafuddaula would reach Benares ;²⁷⁵ it obviously implied that he desired to utilise the good offices of the Nawab for his cause. In another, he asked Daya Ram to send Ghulam Hussain Khan to Haidar Beg, the prime minister of the Nawab, to plead his case.²⁷⁶ In the third one, he specifically ordered his officials not to torture any Englishman.²⁷⁷ Lastly, he sent entreaties after entreaties to Hastings to have mercy on him. Ghulam Hussain Khan significantly observed, "I saw despite so much bloodshed, he still hoped for redress of his grievances at the hands of the councillors. It is no use regretting the event after it had happened."²⁷⁸

It may be pertinently asked, if Chait Singh was so much subservient to the British, why he hesitated to pay the subsidy. To this, our answer is, it was partly owing to his desire to get some assurance from the Governor-General for retrieving his fallen fortune and partly owing to the pressure of Francis and his coterie, and his failure to understand who represented the English authority in India.

As to Hastings, there cannot be any denial of the fact that his attitude towards Chait Singh was both high-handed and vindictive. But he had certain positive grievances against Chait Singh whom he had virtually maintained in the position of the Raja from the

clutches of Shujauddaula. It is a fact that Chait Singh had dubious dealings with Hastings. On the one hand, he sought shelter under his protective wings and, on the other, conspired with his enemies in the Council and outside. This dubious role of the man, whom Hastings had once regarded as his son, must have caused deep resentment to the Governor-General who, in anger, crossed the limits of decorum and decency and punished Chait Singh in a way which is difficult to justify. Graham, Coote, Ausan Singh, Rani Golab Kaur, the Maulvis and a host of others, who pulled the strings from behind, deepened the crisis by fanning the prejudice of Hastings against the Raja. Downfall of Chait Singh was the outcome of the vindictiveness of Hastings, but his vindictiveness was largely the creation of the enemies of the Raja and of the Raja himself.

The Raja was a victim of the high-handed attitude of Hastings as much as of Council-politics and family feuds ; the tragedy of Chait Singh was to a large extent a tragedy of caste-ridden India and of the divisions and conspiracies which submerged the country in the 18th century.

Notes

1. *Siyar.*, III, pp. 74-75, *T.T.*, p. 85. Barwell writes that Clavering and his party from the very outset started a "predetermined, preconcerted system of opposition" (*Bengal : Past & Present*, XIII, p. 74).

2. *T.T.*, p. 85, *B.N.*, p. 274. *Siyar.*, III, p. 75, "The mutual aversion was carried so far that the partisans of either side became as animated as their principals and soon extended their principles and animosity throughout the whole kingdom". (*Siyar.*, III, p. 75).

3. *T.T.*, p. 85, *B.N.*, p. 274. Fowke, who belonged to the majority group, was the Resident at Benares. He pressed the Raja to disclose all the *nazranas* and *salamis* which had been paid to Hastings.

4. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 39,875. To court, 26 Sep. 1776, Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 108.

5. *T.T.*, p. 85, *B.N.*, p. 275, "General Clavering is not qualified to hold the reins of a government". "Asto Francis, like your gunpower, he is not worth wasting words". Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 120.

6. F.S.C., 23 Dec. 1776, No. 10.

7. Benares Correspondence, II, p. 2, Auriol to Graham, 23 Dec. 1776, F.S.C., 13 Jan. 1777, No. 18, Draft of Instructions to Graham, 9 Jan. 1777.

8. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 45422, Graham to Anderson, 28 May 1777, Graham was to draw the same salary as Fowke and Barwell's salary was Rs. 300 per month (F.S.C., 9 Jan. 1777, No. 18). Barwell admitted to his sister that

this was the third of the advantages (*Bengal: Past & Present*, XVI, Barwell to his sister, 12 Feb. 1777),

9. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 465.

10. *T.T.*, p. 85.

11. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, p. 94. Marshall in ch. v of the same book has revealed the role of Graham on the basis of Kinross House MSS, microfilms of which are not yet available in India.

12. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 45422, Graham to Anderson, 5 Apr. 1777.

13. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, op. cit., p. 95.

14. The Nawab of Murshidabad was informed in early April, 1777, to consider the proposal of abolition of the Mint (C.P.C., V, Letter No. 519). For details see F.S.C., 2 June 1777, Nos. 1 & 2.

15. F.S.C., 2 June 1777, No. 1. Representation of Chait Singh, enclosure to Graham's letter, 23 May 1777.

16. F.S.C., 2 June 1777, No. 1, Graham to council, 23 May 1777. This letter shows that Graham did not adopt a stern attitude to the Raja immediately after joining his assignment. Notwithstanding his apathy to the Raja, the history of his Residency would have been different, if Hastings had his old sympathy for Chait Singh.

17. F.S.C., 2 June 1777, No. 2, Council to Graham, 2 June 1777.

18. *Ibid.*

19. F.S.C., 30 June 1777, No. 2, Graham to Council, 12 June 1777.

20. Parkes and Merivale, *Memoirs of Francis*, II, op. cit., p. 86. The packet was opened in the Council on the 19th June, Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 151.

21. When Hastings was facing humiliation at the hands of the hostile majority, he gave his agent in London on March 25, 1775, discretionary powers to resign. Hastings withdrew the discretionary power on May 18, 1775. But having obtained certain conditions from Lord North, his agent tendered his resignation which was subsequently accepted by the Court of Directors. For details see Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, pp. 151-161, and *Siyar*, III, p. 89, *T.T.*, pp. 84-85.

22. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., pp. 151-154, *T.T.*, pp. 84-85, *Siyar*, III, p. 89, Beveridge, *History of India*, II, pp. 424-427.

23. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., 159. "Some of the bazars had closed, the extraordinary speed of Indian rumour flashed through the provinces, at Benares Chait Singh was preparing to send his vakil to ask advice from Joseph Fowke". (Keith Feilling, *Hastings*, p. 187).

24. *B.N.*, pp. 270-271, *M.K.*, (Benares copy), p. 99; *B.N.*, p. 270 notes 'Maharaj Mishra was not so able and experienced as Ali Naqi'.

25. *B.N.*, p. 271, *M.K.*, (Benares copy), p. 102. See also I.H.R.C., XXX, pt. 2 pp. 17-18, Beveridge, *History of India*, II, p. 533-534.

26. Beveridge, *History of India*, II, op. cit., pp. 533-534. Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection*, p. 8.

27. I.H.R.C., XXX, pt. 2. p. 18. "This was the beginning of the trouble for Chait Singh. Francis Fowke was replaced by Thomas Graham", But Fowke was replaced in January 1777. The letter of the Council, dated June 2,

1777 (as dealt earlier) was not sympathetic to the Raja. This incident took place in June 1777. So it cannot mark "the beginning of trouble for Chait Singh."

28. *T.T.*, p. 85. Details of Chait Singh's contact with Clavering is found in *T.T.*, p. 85, and *B.N.*, pp. 271 & 274.

29. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, op. cit., p. 95.

30. *T.T.*, p. 86, Ausan Singh was lying in distress at Murshidabad and his relations had been suffering indignities at Ramnagar.

31. *T.T.*, p. 86. The bestowing of *khelat* is confirmed by C.P.C., V, Letter No. 834.

32. Benares Correspondence, II, p. 45, Hastings to Graham, 10 July 1777.

33. Benares Correspondence, II, p. 47, Hastings to Chait Singh, 10 July 1777.

34. Parkes and Merivale, *Life of Francis*, II, p. 97, See also Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoir of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 110.

35. Benares Correspondence, II, p. 46, Hastings to Graham, 10 July 1777.

36. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 834.

37. Eur. MSS. G.P., 51. Graham to Council, 27 Aug. 1777.

38. F.S.C., 29 Sep. 1777, No. A, enclosure to Graham's letter, 17 Sep. 1777, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 649.

39. F.S.C., 29 Sep. 1777, No. 2, Graham to Council, 17 Sep. 1777.

40. F.S.C., 29 Sep. 1777, No. 4, Council to Graham, 29 Sep. 1777.

41. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 662.

42. F.S.C., 1 Dec. 1777, No. 6, Council to Graham, 1 Dec. 1777, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 718. The estimate must be very modest because it was calculated by Graham.

43. Eur. MSS. F 4. Chait Singh to Francis, received on 3rd Nov. 1777.

44. *T.T.*, pp. 85-86, *B.N.*, p. 272. He must have been dismissed between November, 1777, and February, 1778. (C.P.C., V, Letter No. 361 & 854).

45. *B.N.*, p. 283, *T.T.*, p. 86. See also Marshall's *Impeachment of Hastings*, p. 95. This incident must have taken place in the beginning of 1778. (C.P.C., V, Letter No. 825).

46. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 825.

47. *T.T.*, p. 86, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 825 and 834.

48. *T.T.*, p. 86. The relatives of Ausan Singh were in the confinement at Ramnagar and suffering a thousand indignities.

49. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 834. Out of this Rs. 65 000, Ausan Singh was to pay Rs. 15,000 to the Raja and to retain Rs. 50,000 for himself. *T.T.*, p. 100 records, he was given a *jagir* of Rs. 54,000.

50. *T.T.*, p. 13.

51. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 834.

52. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, op. cit., pp. 95-96.

53. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 825, 834 & 854.

54. *T.T.*, p. 86. Amrit Singh was the *dewan* of Muhammad Reza Khan who was arrested for defalcation (F.S.C., 28 Apr. 1772, No. 1), Hastings later on drove him out of Murshidabad. Nawab Muzaffar Jang was a title of Muhammad Reza Khan. *Siyar*, III, p. 58 records he "gave himself all the airs of a sweetheart of his master's". For details of his career, see *Siyar*, III, Section XII.

55. *T.T.*, pp. 86-87.
56. Both *B.N.* and *T.T.* contain detailed accounts of the careers of these two loathsome creatures. See *T.T.*, pp. 96-101.
57. *T.T.*, p. 99, Aliuddin Kubra received Rs. 500 and Zainul Abedin Rs. 300 per month.
58. *T.T.*, pp. 99-100, *B.N.*, pp. 279-280. One funny incident relating to financial extortion is narrated by Khairuddin (p. 100). One day the senior Maulvi visited the Raja and told him that Graham was sick and the doctor prescribed for him the oil of red ant. He asked the Raja to supply red ants weighing seven pounds. It was next to impossible to procure so much red ant. The Raja paid the Maulvi Rs. 3,500 to influence the doctor to change his prescription. This story is too fantastic to be true but, the underlying significance is in fitness with the current of the time,
59. *B.N.*, p. 281. His pay was fixed at Rs. Rs. 500
60. *B.N.*, p. 280, *I.H.R.C.*, XXX, Pt. 2, p. 18, *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 854.
61. The *Munshi* wrote, Hastings intended to divest the Raja of the military forces, but being opposed by Fowke and Francis, he gave up the idea. Secondly, the *farigh khati* had been granted to the Raja due to the exertions of Francis and Fowke. But Francis and Fowke could not have done such things. The fact is that Fowke must have boasted to his *Munshi* and that man, reporting such tall claims, kept the Raja in the dark (*C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 854).
62. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 854.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *B.N.*, p. 416.
65. *F.S.C.*, 9 July 1778, No. 2.
66. *Ibid.*
67. *Eur. MSS.* E 14, Francis to Upton, 27 July, 1778.
68. *F.S.C.*, 9 July 1778, No. 2.
69. *Ibid.*
70. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1008.
71. *Ibid.*, Letter No. 1026 and 1067.
72. *F.S.C.*, 17 Aug. 1778, No. 7, Chait Singh to Hastings, *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1026.
73. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1067.
74. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1067. Dow had assisted Chait Singh in military operations against Ajit Singh (*F.S.C.*, 13 Jan. 1777, No. 8).
75. Ram Singh was the son of Balkisan Hazari, an officer of Chait Singh. He was then in Calcutta.
76. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1067. *M.K.*, p. 123. "It has been the policy of Mr. Francis and a most unjustifiable one, to inculcate every report true or false by which my influence may be weakened and people discouraged from confiding in the acts of the Government and excited to oppose them. For this purpose he himself circulated copies of the letters written by the court of Directors to the late Sir John Clavering and caused Persian translations of them to be sent to Rajah Cheyt Sing". (Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, op. cit., p. 192).
77. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1067; *M.K.*, pp. 124-125.
78. *C.P.C.*, V, Letter No. 1067.

79. Beveridge, *History of India*, II, op. cit., p. 534.
80. F.S.C., 17 Aug. 1778, No. 6, Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 204.
81. F.S.C., 17 Aug. 1778, No. 6.
82. Ibid., the Raja procrastinated and contacted the opponents of Hastings but he acknowledged the demand and sent a letter which was received on the 30th July 1778 (F.S.C., 17 Aug. 1778, No. 7, Chait Singh to Hastings, received on the 30th July 1778). He wrote, "My patron—I am the servant of the Sircar—I will write to you fully hereafter".
83. F.S.C., 17 Aug. 1778, No. 8, Council to Graham, 17 Aug. 1778.
84. H.P.C., 28 Sep. 1778, No. 2 Graham to Council, 14 Sep. 1778. On the 25th August, Graham had communicated the orders of the Board to the Raja.
85. H.P.C., 28 Sept. No. 3, Chait Singh to Council, 20 Sep. 1778.
86. H.P.C., 28 Sep. 1778, No. 4, Council to Graham, 28 Sep. 1778.
87. H.P.C., 5 Oct. 1778, No. 22, Graham to Council, 22 Sep. 1778.
88. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1128.
89. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1143.
90. H.P.C., 12 Oct. 1778, No. 6, Council to Graham, 12 Oct. 1778, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1117.
91. H.P.C., 22 Oct. 1778, No. 30, Middleton to Council, 15 Sep. 1778.
92. H.P.C., 22 Oct. 1778, No. 41, Council to Graham, 22 Oct. 1778.
93. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1145.
94. Ibid., Letter No. 1230.
95. Ibid.
96. Ibid., Letter Nos. 1128, 1143, 1193 & 1194.
97. Ibid., Letter No. 1336 & 1338. The last letter was written on Jan. 18, 1779.
98. His correspondence with David Anderson, found in B.M. Add. MSS., No. 45422 illustrates this point.
99. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1336.
100. Ibid., Letter No. 1338.
101. Ibid., Letter No. 1356.
102. Ibid., Letter No. 1362.
103. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., pp. 260-261.
104. Davies, *Hastings and Oudh*, p. 134. There complaints are groundless. Ausan Singh, the arch conspirator, must have reported the matter falsely to Graham. Moreover, there is no proof to show that Chait Singh conspired with the Marathas against the English.
105. H.P.C., 28 June 1779, No. 17, Graham to Council, 25 May 1779.
106. Ibid.
107. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1546.
108. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1528 and B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29155, Hastings to Coote, 18 Dec. 1779.
109. F.S.C., 19 July 1779, No. 1.
110. F.S.C., 19 July 1779, No. 2, Council to Graham, 19 July 1779; C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1547,
111. F.S.C., 26 Aug. 1779, No. 1, Graham to Council, 16 Aug. 1779.

112. F.S.C., 26 Aug. 1779, No. IA, Chait Singh to Council, C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1569.
113. F.S.C., 26 Aug. 1779, No. 2.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid.
116. F.S.C., 26 Aug. 1779, No. 3, Council to Graham, 26 Aug. 1779. Graham was to realise the cost of the troops from the Raja.
117. H.P.C., 13 Sep. 1779, No. 20, Graham to Council, 2 Sep. 1779.
118. Ibid.
119. F.S.C., 29 Sep. 1779, No. 4, Chait Singh's Representation.
120. F.S.C., 29 Sep. 1779, No. 5, Council to Graham, 29 Sep. 1779.
121. F.S.C., 28 Oct. 1779, No. 1, Graham to Council, 19 Oct. 1779.
122. F.S.C., 1 Nov. 1779, No. 5, Graham to Council, 22 Oct. 1779.
123. F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1779, No. 2, Graham to Council, 27 Oct. 1779.
124. *T.T.*, p. 133. For details see *T.T.*, pp. 132-135.
125. F.S.C., 13 Sep. 1779, No. 4.
126. H.P.C., 25 Oct. 1779, No. 14.
127. H.P.C., 29 Nov. 1779, No. 10 ; *T.T.*, p. 135.
128. *B.N.*, pp. 292-293.
129. *B.N.*, pp. 294-295.
130. *B.N.*, pp. 295-296.
131. *B.N.*, p. 297.
132. *T.T.*, p. 139.
133. *B.N.*, p. 284 ; *T.T.*, p. 140.
134. *T.T.*, p. 140.
135. *T.T.*, pp. 140-153. *B.N.*, pp. 284-285, agrees with *T.T.* on main points Coote claimed one lac of rupees from Chait Singh because Balwant had promised to pay one lac of rupees to Munro. Coote could show neither any agreement between Balwant and Munro nor any letter of authority. See also Wyllie, *Life of Coote*, p. 173.
136. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29,144, Coote to Hastings, 2 Dec. 1779.
137. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29155, Hastings to Coote, 18 Dec. 1779.
138. F.S. Procs., 27 Feb. 1780. Conditions of reconciliation are to be found in Hastings's letter Lawrence Sullivan, 4 Mar. 1780, quoted in Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, pp. 251-253.
139. From Court, 27 May 1779, from Court, 30 June 1778.
140. *T.T.*, p. 153. Aliuddin Kubra, Zainul Abedin and Chaitram *chopdar* lost their occupations.
141. *B.N.*, pp. 301-302, *T.T.*, pp. 158 wrongly records that this deputation was sent when Markham was the Resident. B. M. Add. MSS., No. 29218 makes it clear that it was at Calcutta some time between the 26th and 29th May, 1780.
142. Ibid.
143. These keepwiths are impossible to read from the microfilms, but the sense can be known (B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29218, Notes 26 & 29 May, 1780).
144. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 303.
145. Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection at Benares*, p. 3 ; Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 303.

146. *T.T.*, 158. Khairuddin writes, "If Sadanand had gone to Mr. Vansittart who possessed great influence with the Governor-General, it is probable that Raja's affairs would have been settled as he desired", *I.H.R.C.*, XXX, pt. 2, p. 20.

147. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29199, Minute of Wheler and Francis, 15 June, 1780.

148. F.S.C., 22 June, 1780, No. 1.

149. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1920.

150. H.P.C., 26 Oct. 1780, No. 21.

151. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1980.

152. H.P.C., 26 Oct. 1780, No. 21, Council to Fowke, 19 Oct. 1780.

153. *Ibid.*

154. H.P.C., 26 Oct. 1780, No. 22, Council to Stibbert, 19 Oct. 1780.

155. H.P.C., 26 Oct. 1780, No. 30, Stibbert to Council, 20 Oct. 1780.

156. F.S.C., 2 Nov. 1780, No. 1. An account of five lacs of rupees paid by the Raja in 1780 :—

23 July.....Rs. 100,000

19 Sep.....Rs. 170,000

26 Sep.....Rs. 130,000

7 Oct.....Rs. 100,000 (C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 207).

157. Banaras Correspondence, III, pp. 49-50. A petition from the deceased *subadar*'s son, enclosure to Coote's letter, 3 Aug. 1780.

158. Banaras Correspondence, III, p. 47, Coote to Fowke, 3 Aug. 1780.

159. H.P.C., 14 Dec. 1780, No. M, Fowke to Coote, 11 Aug. 1780.

160. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 2064.

161. H.P.C., 14 Dec. 1780, No. 46, Eaton to Council, 16 Nov. 1780.

162. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 2064.

163. H.P.C., 14 Dec. 1780, No. 46, Eaton to Council, 16 Nov. 1780.

164. H.P.C., 14 Dec. 1780, No. 48, Council to Fowke, 14 Dec. 1780.

165. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 2064.

166. F.S.C., 2 Nov. 1780, No. 1.

167. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 2059.

168. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, p. 100.

169. F.S.C., 14 Jan. 1781, No. 12, Minute of Hastings

170. Grier, *Letters of Hastings to his wife*, op. cit. p. 118. Markham was the Governor-General's Private Secretary, but he had come originally with Wheler who was much gratified by his advancement. He had been a zealous and efficient Secretary and a man of great personal attraction, but he was hardly 21 years old and his slight knowledge of Persian left him largely in the hands of translators. (Grier, *Letters of Hastings*, p. 119).

171. F.S.C., 14 Jan. 1781, No. 12.

172. *Ibid.*

173. *Ibid.*

174. *B.N.*, p. 307, *T.T.*, pp. 157-158 and also p. 153, and *I.C.R.C.*, XXX, pt. 2, p. 20.

175. H.P.C., 19 Feb. 1781, No. 13, Markham to Council, 10 Feb. 1781 and C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 27.

176. *B.N.*, pp. 279-280. This is partially corroborated by Hastings in his *Narrative of the Insurrection*, p. 27. "I do not know but it may be true. He had received positive orders and those had been repeated. It was his duty to obey them, not to waste my time with letters of excuse".

177. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29155, Hastings to Coote, 18 Dec. 1779.

178. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 29.

179. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II ; op. cit., p. 383.

180. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29200, Resolution of the Council, 3 July 1781.

181. *T.T.*, p. 160, *B.N.*, p. 318, Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection*, p. 2, Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, pp. 113-114.

182. *T.T.*, pp. 160-161, I.H.R.C., XXX, pt. 2, p. 21.

183. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 24 Aug. 1781.

184. *T.T.*, pp. 161-162, *B.N.*, pp. 320-322, I.H.R.C., XXX, pt. 2, p. 21.

185. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Chait Singh, 15 Aug. 1781.

186. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Chait Singh to Hastings, 15 Sep. 1781.

187. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 24 Aug. 1781.

188. *T.T.*, p. 162.

189. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Markham, 15 Aug. 1781.

190. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Markham to Hastings, 16 Aug. 1781.

191. Ibid.

192. Ibid.

193. *T.T.*, pp. 164-166, F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 24 Aug. 1781. Hastings himself admitted in a letter to Scott on Jan. 1, 1782, "I have no doubt of the fellows insolence but I have taken no notice of it in the *Narrative* because it had no necessary relation to it (Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 425). Oldham writes, "This man addressed the Rajah in an insolent manner saying that he was Cheyte Ram and the Rajah only Cheyte Sing ; that every servant of the Company was as the Company, and that if one of them was touched he would tie a rope on the Rajah and drag him through the streets". (*Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, I, p. 114.

194. *T.T.*, p. 166.

195. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 24 Aug. 1781.

196. Ibid.

197. Ibid., Report of Popham, 16 Aug. 1781.

198. F.S.C., 4 Sep. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Council, 24 Aug. 1781.

199. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Hastings to Wheler, 27 Aug. 1781.

200. Ibid.

201. F.S.C., 7 Sep. 1781, No. 11, Ross to Council, 28 Aug. 1781.

202. *T.T.*, p. 103.

203. Ibid., p. 106.

204. F.S.C., 7 Sep. 1781, No. 11, Ross to Council, 28 Aug. 1781.

205. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Hastings to Wheler, 27 Aug. 1781.

206. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 207.

207. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Hastings to Wheler, 27 Aug. 1781.

208. *T.T.*, p. 109.

209. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, Hastings to Wheler, 13 Oct. 1781.

210. Ibid.
211. F.S.C., 7 Sep. 1781, No. 11, Noakes to Hawkesley, 25 Aug. 1781.
212. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Hastings to Wheler, 27 Aug. 1781.
213. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 13 Oct. 1781.
214. Ibid.
215. Ibid.
216. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Hastings to Wheler, 31 Aug. 1781.
217. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 10, Hastings to Wheler, 4 Sep. 1781.
218. Ibid.
219. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 11, Hastings to Wheler, 11 Sep. 1781.
220. Ibid.
221. T.T., p. 111.
222. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 12, Hastings to Wheler, 29 Sep. 1781.
223. Ibid.
224. Ibid.
225. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 5, Popham to Council, 9 Oct. 1781.
226. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 12, Hastings to Wheler, 29 Sep. 1781.
227. Ibid.
228. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 11, Hastings to Wheler, 23 Sep. 1781.
229. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 5, Popham to Council, 9 Oct. 1781.
230. F.S. Procs., Popham 18th Oct. 1781, to Hastings, 20 Sep. 1781.
231. Ibid.
232. Ibid.
233. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 5, Popham to Council, 9 Oct. 1781.
234. Ibid.
235. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 12, Hastings to Wheler, 29 Sep. 1781.
236. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 5, Popham to Council, 9 Oct. 1781.
237. Ibid.
238. Ibid.
239. Ibid.
240. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 12, Hastings to Wheler, 29 Sep. 1781.
241. F.S.C., 5 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Hastings, 19 Oct. 1781.
242. Ibid.
243. F.S.C., 5 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Hastings, 19 Oct. 1781.
244. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 262.
245. F.S.C., 5 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Council, 19 Oct. 1781.
246. F.S.C., 19 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Council, 6 Nov. 1781.
247. Gleig, *Memoirs of Warren Hastings*, II, op. cit., pp. 415-416.
248. Marshall, *Impeachment of Hastings*, op. cit., p. 106.
249. F.S.C., 19 Nov. 1781, No. 2, Popham to Council, 6 Nov. 1781.
250. F.S.C., 19 Nov. 1781, No. 4, Popham to Council. 10 No. 1781.
251. Ibid.
252. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, p. 416.
253. Dodwell, *Hastings' letter to Macpherson*, op. cit., p. 97.
254. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, pp. 416-417.
255. Ibid.
256. Hand, *Early English Administration of Bihar*, p. 5.

257. Ibid., p. 8.
258. F.S.C., 7 Sep. 1781, No. 12, Grome to Ross, 27 Aug. 1781.
259. Shahabad Division Records, Basta I, Crawford to Ross, 29 Sep. 1781.
260. F.S.C., 28 Sep. 1781, No. 1, Ross to Council, 2 Sep. 1781.
261. F.S.C., 7 Sep. 1781, No. 11, Ross to Council, 28 Aug. 1781.
262. Hand, *Early English Administration*, op. cit., p. 8.
263. F.S.C., 28 Sep. 1781, No. 1, Ross to Council, 2 Sep. 1781.
264. For details of operation against Fateh Sahi, See F.S.C., 22 Nov. 1781, No. 3.
265. Shahabad Division Records, Basta I, Crawford to Ross, 11 Sep. 1781
266. Hand, *Early English Administration of Bihar*, pp. 10-14. Also See Shahabad District Records Basta No. 1.
267. Hand, *Early English Administration of Bihar*, pp. 15-16.
268. Hastings, *Narrative of Insurrection of Benaris*, pp. 64-66, Letter of Middleton, 21 Sep. 1781.
269. F.S.C. 29 Oct. 1781, No. 2, Middleton to Hastings, 9 Oct. 1781.
270. From Court (Sec), 30 Apr. 1782.
271. I.H.R.C., XXX, Pt 2, p. 23.
272. Grier, *Letters of Hastings to his wife*, p. 153.
273. *T.T.*, p. 109.
274. Ibid., p. 110.
275. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29200, Affidavid of Markham, 2 Dec. 1781.
276. Ibid.
277. Ibid.
278. *B.N.*, p. 360.

CHAPTER V

BENARES IN TRANSITION (1781—1787)

After the restoration of order and tranquillity, Hastings returned to Benares on the morning of September 28, 1781,¹ and decided to stay there till the affairs of the country were entirely settled and till provisions were made for the permanency of the English authority by “precluding the possibility of a renewal of the like scenes”² of insurrections in future. A proclamation was issued on September 29, 1781, granting pardon to all who would return to obedience, excepting Chait Singh, his brother, Sujan Singh, and the residents of Gopiganj, who had actively participated in the insurrection.³ On September 30, 1781, Mahipnarain, the grandson of the late Raja Balwant Singh, was vested with the *zamindari* of Benares.⁴

While making a new settlement, Hastings wanted to deprive the Raja of “the exercise of any Privilege or Authority on which an opinion of Independency could be founded”,⁵ and also to establish direct English administration over the city of Benares, which, being the seat of Hindu religion, was visited by the pilgrims from all over India. Hastings wrote to Wheler on November 1, 1781, “It is obvious that every Defect of Civil Government must be productive of more than ordinary evils; and these evils are propagated in all quarters of India to the discredit of our Government”.⁶

On November 5, 1781, Hastings concluded the settlement of the *zamindari* of Benares on Mahipnarain for the fixed and perpetual *jama* of 40 lacs of rupees payable in monthly instalments of Rs. 2,92,727-as. 4 for each of the first eleven months and eight lacs for the last month of *Bhadon* with a remission of Rs. 6,66,666-as. 10.⁷ The Raja was not made responsible for the outstanding balances due from Chait Singh, but he was to pay the arrears of the revenue whenever he realised them.⁸ As the Raja was a young lad of eighteen *sans* any administrative experience, his father, Durgvijayi Singh, was appointed the *naib* of the *zamindari* on his behalf.⁹ Mahipnarain was granted the right of making *bandobast* with a view

to increasing his profit. A perpetual lease was granted to Mahipnarain for the *amini* and *faujdari* of Chait Singh except the city of Benares, where his right was restricted to the collection of revenue and to the appointment of officials for the said purpose only. The *kotwali* of Jaunpore was entrusted to the Raja. But he was specifically forbidden to erect forts or any sort of defence within the limits of his *zamindari*. He was not to keep under his employ any troop, either horse or foot, without the permission of the Governor-General and his Council. And, whensoever, the Raja would require the assistance of the military to enforce law and order in the country or to conduct the work of collection of revenue, such troops must invariably be the employees of the Company.¹⁰

Hastings delivered the Mint at Benares to the Resident who was authorised to conduct all business concerning it. Markham was asked to ascertain the amount of annual income, realised by Chait Singh during the last five years of his rule, to calculate the average thereof and to grant the Raja the same amount as remission from the stipulated revenue.¹¹

Hastings also rewarded all those persons who had rendered service to the Company during the insurrection. Bhagat Singh, the *zamundar* of Chowra, Edel Singh of Agoree, Govindjit of Kuntit, Ali Azam Khan of Ghazipore and Daljit Singh of Bijaygarh got "proportionate allowance."¹² Bandhu Khan received a *jagir* of Rs. 2000 in the village of Jalalpur in the *pargana* of Patita.¹³ Jagannath Singh got a *jagir* of Rs. 1200 in the *pargana* of Sadara.¹⁴ Beniram Pandit was granted the *pargana* of Bahriabad which fetched an annual income of Rs. 25,000.¹⁵ Mahipnarain, naturally, sought proportionate remission in his *jama* to the Company for these grants. Hastings held that no remission would be made for the *zamindars* and holders of land, who had been already enjoying such benefits in the days of Chait Singh. Regarding the new grants, of course, he agreed to allow necessary deductions.¹⁶

As to the city of Benares, Hastings remitted certain discreditable and impolitic duties levied on the strangers. These impositions were not grievous in amount, but irritative in the mode of collection. But no remission was sanctioned to the Raja for the abolition of these taxes.¹⁷

Regarding the administration of the town of Benares, Hastings “established three distinct departments for the Police, and the Civil and Criminal jurisdiction” under “the Regulation and the Control of one Chief Magistrate”, who would be immediately subordinate to the Governor-General-in-Council. The chief magistrate was to exercise absolute jurisdiction on every inhabitant of the city of Benares for the preservation of peace and administration of justice. He was directed to appoint a *kotwal* who was to apprehend or imprison any person likely to commit robbery or murder or any act of violence against peace, person or property and to deliver such persons to the *faujdari adalat*. The *kotwal* was empowered to suppress the disturbers of peace by inflicting punishment to the extent of 20 lashes¹⁸, upon them.

The chief magistrate was further directed to set up a court of criminal justice for the city of Benares and to lay down the rules of procedure for its function. He was asked to appoint one *darogha* and three Maulvis well-versed in Muslim law to preside over this court and to try all cases of murder, robbery, thefts, etc., committed within the jurisdiction of the city of Benares. The proceedings of the court were to be submitted for confirmation to the chief magistrate who was to lay down rules of procedure for the criminal justice. A civil court with one president (*darogha*) and three inferior judges (*munsiffs*) was to be established for the city of Benares. They were to decide all disputes relating to property and inheritance in accordance with the personal law of the parties. For assistance in the interpretation of private laws, they could requisition the services of the Maulvis and Pandits. The judgment of this court would be final in all cases having the valuation below Rs. 1000. In cases involving larger sums, an appeal would lie to the chief magistrate.¹⁹

These three sets of officials, belonging to police, and the civil, and criminal jurisdiction, were completely subordinate to the authority of the chief magistrate, in whom was vested the power of their appointment and dismissal. They were to obey all orders issued by the chief magistrate, observe all rules and regulations framed by him and regularly submit to him a report of the work done, together with the proceedings of their departments. The subordinate courts

were empowered to compel the witnesses, living outside the jurisdiction of the city, to attend at the courts in person, when necessary. The chief magistrate could apprehend all offenders who might flee away from the city in order to avoid punishment. The chief magistrate was required to transmit to the Governor-General and his Council every month the copies of the proceedings of his court, the report on appointments and dismissals, and of the new regulations issued by him.²⁰

Ali Ibrahim Khan was appointed the chief magistrate of the city of Benares. About him Hastings remarked, "All India could not furnish a man so equal to the charge of it as Ally Ibraheem Cawn".²¹ Hastings was very hopeful of the success of the new police system and judiciary of the town of Benares. On January 1, 1782, he wrote to Scott, "The people are pleased and if it answers my expectation, its influence will extend my reputation to the remotest parts of India".²²

After the settlement of November, 1781, Hastings claimed that Benares was now as much a member of their Government "as the Zemindarry of Burdwan and more effectively theirs than many parts of Bihar".²³ But this claim is too tall to be taken seriously. The reasons are not far to seek. Despite considerable curtailment of his powers, the Raja was still something more than a *zamindar*. He remained the fountain-head of justice and sole custodian of law and order throughout the province except the city of Benares.

In making his new arrangement, Hastings had to face considerable difficulties from Ausan Singh who was bent on upsetting his plans. So, he had to be interned in the *pargana* of Saidabad in November, 1781. Moreover, Hastings directed the *naib* to dismiss all persons, whom Ausan Singh had appointed to manage the *zamindari*.²⁴ After "the new administration and the authority of the Naib was everywhere completely established", Hastings left Benares on January 7, 1782.²⁵

The administrative machinery, as envisaged by Hastings, did not work smoothly. After the insurrection at Benares, the real authority in the province was the English Company. Though Durgvijayi Singh was expected to collect the revenues and maintain law and order in the province, yet it was impossible for him to

perform his task without the support of the English authorities.²⁶ It suffered terribly owing to the clash of authority between the jurisdiction of the chief magistrate and that of the *naib*.

On March 31, 1782, the *naib* sent a body of armed men, numbering 150 or 200, to enter into the city of Benares to carry off Basant Lal, indebted to him on account of non-payment of revenue. Basant Lal resisted the attempt to arrest him. In the skirmish that followed, one unconcerned spectator received a fatal injury.²⁷ Markham deputed Capt. Hogan to restore peace and order.²⁸ On the Resident's requisition, the *naib* was forced to deliver the leaders of his party²⁹ for trial by the criminal court of Benares. Markham called Durgvijayi Singh and told him that he had no right to send his men into the town of Benares. On April 1, 1782, Markham wrote to the Government, "It is incumbent on me to watch with a jealous eye, lest any encroachment should be made, as in the present case, on the authority of the Chief Magistrate, as peace and quiet of the town, in a great measure, depend on the reverence and respect with which his character is considered and the knowledge which the public ought to have of his independence from any control of the Rajah".³⁰

Durgvijayi Singh, on the other hand, prayed that the particular case should be tried by the Resident himself and that it would be derogatory to him, if his men, who had been sent to arrest a defaulter, were tried by the *faujdari adalat* of Benares.³¹ But the Bengal Government upheld the action taken by Markham. On April 9, 1782, Markham was directed to convey to Durgvijayi Singh the displeasure of the Government at his attempt for introducing a party of armed men into the city of Benares.³²

On April 30, 1782, orders were issued that, whenever a culprit managed to escape from the town into the country under the jurisdiction of the *naib*, the chief magistrate should not send his men to arrest him, but call upon the *naib* to assist him in the seizure. Similarly, in case of escape of one of the culprits into the town, the *naib* was to apply to the magistrate of Benares for the seizure of the culprit.³³

Meanwhile, in the middle of April, 1782, a daring dacoity, in which about 22 citizens were either killed or wounded, was commi-

ted at Benares. Goods worth Rs. 2000 were looted. The culprits escaped to the countryside. Durgvijayi Singh was asked to arrest the culprits and a reward of Rs. 100 in cash and of 100 *bighas* in land was proclaimed for arresting the dacoits. The *naib* did not take any action and gave out that the culprits could not be traced, though they had taken shelter in the *pargana* of Zamania.³⁴ The magistrate of Benares sent a force to arrest them. Zalim Singh, the *amil* of Zamania, resisted the attempt. In the skirmish, one of the robbers was killed, ten of them were arrested and others managed to escape.³⁵ Hastings became highly exasperated at "great impropriety and evil tendency" of the *naib's* conduct and tried to teach him, through the medium of his *wakil* at Calcutta, "the necessity of amending his behaviour".³⁶

But Durgvijayi Singh did not mend his ways. Markham soon charged him with connivance at the acts of oppression on the ryots and encouragement of lawlessness, perpetrated, by his *amils*, particularly by Zalim Singh, the *amil* of Zamania and Bhadohi, Sankar Ratan, the *amil* of Mau, Bhagwant Ray, the *amil* of Saidpur, and Banyad Singh, the *amil* of Kunda.³⁷ Markham suggested that some concrete steps should be taken to stop such things.

On July 15, 1782, Hastings directed Markham that these four *amils* should be brought to Benares and kept in confinement. A board, consisting of five members, should enquire into the allegations of the ryots against them. During the absence of these *amils* from their stations, the *naib* should appoint proper persons. In case of his failure to appoint suitable substitutes, the Resident was authorised to do the same. Hastings made it clear, "I am willing to have patience with him and to make every allowance for the novelty of the situation, in which he is placed and, for difficulties which may attend it, but if I perceive in him a wilful neglect of my advice and an obstinate adherence to that system of conduct against which I find you have so often warned him, he will certainly feel the most severe effects of my displeasure".³⁸ Hastings told Durgvijayi Singh in specific terms that he would be held responsible, if *kists* were delayed or ryots oppressed or any irregularities committed.³⁹

The dissatisfaction of Markham with Durgvijayi Singh went on increasing. The *kist* of the month of *Bhadon*, which fell due on August

21, 1782, was paid in part only i.e. the *naib* had paid Rs. 1,55,000 out of the stipulated *kist* of 8 lacs of rupees. The *naib* had paid Rs. 27,27,000 in all for the *fasli* year 1189. The Resident was of the opinion that, though Durgvijayi Singh had ready cash more than sufficient to answer his demand, he had been intentionally withholding the payment of the *kist*.

On September 9, 1782, Markham urged Hastings to remove Durgvijayi Singh from the position of the *naib* for mismanagement of the affairs, bad choice that he had made of the *amils*, the mistrust which the people had of him, and also for the numerous complaints preferred by the ryots of every *pargana* against him.⁴⁰ He observed, "An innate sloth in his disposition and procrastination in every business, where application and despatch were necessary, make him unfit for the present situation."⁴¹ On his own initiative, the Resident met Ali Ibrahim Khan in the garden of Madho Das on September 7, 1782, and offered him the post of the *naib*, but the rank of the *naib* being lower than his present position, he declined the offer, and recommended that any one of the three persons, Jaggerdeva Singh, Nikhil Singh and Ausan Singh, might be appointed. He, of course, considered Ausan Singh to be the most suitable candidate.⁴²

On September 29, 1782, without consulting his colleagues, Hastings authorised Markham to appoint a new *naib* in place of Durgvijayi Singh, but expressly excluded Ausan Singh.⁴³ He did not like to put Ali Ibrahim Khan to any inconvenience by bestowing this "invidious office" upon him. Markham was advised, however, to avail himself of "his experience and abilities upon all occasions."⁴⁴

Hastings rightly realised that the change of the *naib* was not the sole remedy for the malady of Benares and that there was the imperative need for reforming the system of administration. He wrote to Markham that "distinct offices for distinct purposes, independent of each other, with proper man at the Head of each office, may prevent or detect any Abuses or Irregularities in others and together form a system of reciprocal checks". He also advised him to have one office for receipts and another for treasury ; the officials for both were to be responsible for regularity of their accounts, but were to be in no way subject to the control or interference of the Raja or the *naib*.⁴⁵ Hastings instructed Markham on September 29, 1782,

"In forming these arrangements do not wholly neglect the Rajah, consult him in appearance, but in appearance only. His situation requires that you should do that much, but his youth and inexperience forbid that you should do more".⁴⁶ With regard to Durgvijayi Singh, the Resident was asked to prepare an account of receipts and disbursements transacted by him during the period of his *naibship* and to realise the arrears from him.⁴⁷

Markham waited in vain for some time in the hope of realising the arrears from Durgvijayi Singh who had paid only Rs. 27,27,000 in all. On November 13, 1782, he took the decisive step, placed Durgvijayi Singh under "gentle" confinement and appointed Jaggerdeva Singh in his place. On November 15, 1782, the investiture ceremony took place and Jaggerdeva Singh received a *khelat* from Markham.⁴⁸

Both Rani Golab Kaur and Mahipnarain bitterly protested against this dismissal and prayed for an independent enquiry into the conduct of the Resident and the *naib*.⁴⁹ But the Government did not pay heed to the allegations and entirely approved of the action, taken by the Resident on December 4, 1782.⁵⁰

It is interesting to note that, except the removal of Durgvijayi Singh, Markham had taken no other step to carry out the suggestions of Hastings. It seems that he was only interested in promptly realising the *kists* and in jealously guarding the authority and honour of the chief magistrate of Benares. In accordance with the advice of the Court of Directors on March 20, 1783, Francis Fowke was appointed the Resident at Benares,⁵¹ and was instructed to receive from the Raja the monthly *kists*, to realise the arrears from the late *naib*, to hold the charge of the Mint and to invest Jaggerdeva Singh with a *khelat*.⁵² On May 3, 1783, Fowke invested Jaggerdeva Singh with a fresh *khelat* to prevent any adverse effect which the change of the Resident might produce on his office.⁵³

As a *naib*, Jaggerdeva Singh was very prompt in the payment of the *kists*.⁵⁴ He paid out of his own pocket the *kists* for the period from September, 21, to November 13, 1782, which was really due from Durgvijayi Singh.⁵⁵ But his methods of collection were not above reproach. He credited all money collected by him to the account of the current year, although the ryots had paid the same for the

past years.⁵⁶ One of his tactics of extortion was to settle the same *pargana* on two persons for the same year. To illustrate his fraud, mention may be made of the *pargana* of Zamania, which Jaggerdeva Singh had settled on a revenue of Rs. 1,34,626 to Amrow Singh and Bhagwat Singh. Jaggerdeva Singh had also accepted the half of the revenue as advance from Amrow Singh and Bhagwat Singh. One fine morning, they were arrested by the orders of the *naib* who demanded seventy thousand rupees for their release. Afraid of their lives, they paid off the sum, but the said *pargana* was taken out of their hands and settled with others.⁵⁷

Under the instructions of the *naib*, the *amils* and renters exacted from landholders a large increase on their stipulated rent on flimsy grounds. Those who held their tenures on condition of giving one half of the produce had to pay either the entire, on account of subtle subterfuges, or a large portion of it by false measurement, or on some other pretext. Persons who paid in cash had to pay more than the stipulated sum on account of fraudulent transactions. The avowed principle, on which Jaggerdeva Singh acted and which he had acknowledged to Hastings, was that the entire sum, fixed as the revenue of the province, must be collected and paid at any cost and, if deficiencies arose in some places where crops had failed or where fields had been left uncultivated, that deficiency must be made up from resources of other places where the production had been up to the mark. The policy of Jaggerdeva Singh, though bringing immediate relief to the Government, was destined to prove disastrous in the long run.⁵⁸

In the management of customs, the policy of the *naib* and of the officials under him was not fair. The exorbitant rates, exacted by the arbitrary valuation of goods, double duty—first, upon the seller and afterwards, upon the buyers, and vexatious delays, caused to the merchants, were some of the methods of extortion practised by Jaggerdeva Singh and his officials.⁵⁹

Moreover, Jaggerdeva Singh did not pay “the smallest part of consequence or respect due” to the status of the Raja. Even the town of Ramnagar, the capital of Mahipnarain, had been put under a *Kotwal* directly under the authority of the *naib*. Mahipnarain received neither any share of the *rusum* and *adab*, the symbol of

royal authority, nor a single dam as *madad-kharch* from the *naib*, though six lacs four hundred rupees had been sanctioned by the Government on that head.⁶⁰

On March 14, 1784, Mahipnarain complained to Hastings of his loss of authority, status and prestige in the present set-up and desired, it should be publicly proclaimed that the *naib* was subordinate to the Raja by forcing Jaggerdeva Singh to accept a *khelat* from him. He further suggested that the *amils* and other officials should discharge customary obligation to him. The Raja prayed that the *jagir* of Mailch, which had been snatched away from his father, and those of the *parganas* of Bhadohi and Kyra-Mungror might be granted to him for his personal expenses. He wrote to the Governor-General that "Babu Jaggerdeo Sing, contrary to good policy and welfare of the people, makes exactions from the whole country and does not pay the fixed revenue. This is neither to the advantage of the Sircar nor Ease to the people".⁶¹

The contractors of Chunar, Jaunpore, and Ghazipore complained to Hastings on March 16, 1784, that the *naib* had been distressing them for the last two years and had cheated each of these *rozinadars* at least Rs. 16,330.⁶²

Another malady in the public life of the province of Benares was that the civil administration was shaken to its very foundation by the atrocities committed by armed personnels.⁶³

While at Buxar, in March, 1784, Hastings had asked Jaggerdeva Singh to depute creditable persons to every town to persuade the people, on his way, to remain within their houses. But to his utter disappointment, he saw no signs of habitation but only traces of devastation in the localities through which he passed. At an encampment near a village, called Derrara, in the *pargana* of Zamania, some persons complained to Hastings that, in the administration of Jaggerdeva Singh, they had no protector, hence, they had to fly away on the approach of any military force. Hastings was "followed and fatigued" by the clamours of the discontented people.⁶⁴

While at Benares, Hastings received numberless complaints of the violences committed by the soldiers and *sepoys*, despatched for various purposes, mainly for the purpose of collecting grain

and other provisions for the subsistence of garrisons in the province of Benares and in the bordering provinces.⁶⁵ It was reported to Hastings that the parties of *sepoys* took by force the grain of the country at a lower rate and carried it to the bazaars of Ghazipore, where it was sold at an higher price. Hastings, however, tried to check the repetition of such malpractices and on March 26, 1784, issued orders to the military authorities "not to send sepoys or a single sepoy with authority or for any other purpose whatsoever, into a village of the district except on services required by the Aumil in writing".⁶⁶

Hastings wrote to Wheler on April 2, 1784, "The administration of the province is misconducted and the people oppressed, trade discouraged and the Revenue, though said to be exceeded in actual collection by many lakhs, is in danger of rapid decline from violent appropriation of its means. The Naib or Manager is unfit for his office."⁶⁷ He became convinced that, unless more visible influence and powerful control was put over the head of the Manager, nothing substantial could be achieved.⁶⁸

On May 20, 1784, the Council asked for his proposed plan for the reformation of the province and advised him to impose any check on the *naib*, which the Governor-General might think likely to be effectual for securing "the happiness of the people, without encroaching upon the rights which have been established to the Rajah" by the agreement concluded with him in 1781.⁶⁹

On May 23, 1784, Hastings wrote to Wheler that he proposed to bring about some speedy change by removing the present *naib* and by introducing some mode of superintendence over the province of Benares. He had, of course, no intention of removing Fowke. He expressed his willingness to undertake the reformation of the country and to remain answerable for its effects, "provided the Council thought it proper to entrust him with powers for that purpose."⁷⁰

On June 13, 1784, Hastings submitted his plan for the reconstruction of the administration of Benares. His main objective was to secure happiness for the people and to ensure regular payment of revenues without interfering in the internal administration of the country, or encroaching upon the rights which had been granted to the Raja by the agreement of 1781.⁷¹

According to this plan, the Raja should be made and declared principal in all official acts of the *zamindari*. He should take his seat in the public *kachahri* and all business of the *zamindari* should be transacted in his name and under his seal and signature. But he was not to be empowered to refuse or delay his authentication to the papers submitted to him. The *naib* was to run the actual administration and the Raja was asked not to interfere in it in any way.⁷²

A new post of *amin*, who was to maintain a record of all transactions of the *naib* and to aid him in the appointment of *amils* and in other important measures, was created.⁷³ The *amin* was only to advise but not to command. In cases of serious differences of opinion between the *amin* and the Raja, the *naib* was empowered to appoint a commission of two men, one, to be appointed by the *naib*, on behalf of the Raja, and the other, by the *amin*.⁷⁴ In each *pargana*, one *qanungo*, directly under the *amin*, was to be appointed to enquire into the complaints preferred by the ryots. The Raja and the *naib* were asked to establish a treasury for the receipts of the revenue. The Resident and the *amin* were jointly to appoint a *mutasaddi* who would be posted in the Raja's *kachahri* for keeping a separate account of daily receipts and disbursements. After paying the stipulated revenue, the Raja was to get the surplus amount.⁷⁵

The duties of the Resident were also enumerated. He was to receive the Company's revenue and to be informed of all the business of the *zamindari*. He was to provide the *amils* with military assistance, whenever it was duly requisitioned.⁷⁶

Thus, Hastings attempted to reconstruct the administrative system of Benares by making the Raja the titular head and the *naib* the real authority. He treated the Raja as a minor *zamindar* who had the charge of a country by right of inheritance, but who was not able to manage it.⁷⁷ He also provided for two checks on the authority of the *naib*, namely, the Resident and the *amin*. The office of the *amin* was a definite encroachment on the power and authority of the Resident.⁷⁸ It was a temporary expedient for the Governor-General's avowed dislike of Fowke, about whom he wrote to his wife on September 24, 1784, "I have great objections to his remaining at Benares which I regard as the place of my own peculiar patronage and I am afraid that his presence and influence

will hurt the police of the city which has gained me great and extended reputation".⁷⁹ As to the curtailment of the authority of the Resident, Hastings observed on June 13, 1784, "In truth, I do not propose this as a permanent arrangement. The time will not admit of this".⁸⁰

On June 30, 1784, the Council took into consideration the plan, submitted by the Governor-General. Stabbles was not in favour of introducing any change in the existing system, as the Resident had not complained against the *naib*.⁸¹ Macpherson held that the Raja, under the present *sanad*, had the authority to appoint or dismiss his own *naib*.⁸² He approved the framework of the plan, but objected to that part which laid down that "the Rajah shall not refuse or delay the authentication of such papers etc., or orders, as shall be presented to him by the Naib".⁸³ The views expressed by Wheler, the acting President, were not far from those held by Macpherson.⁸⁴

The Council, however, authorised the Governor-General on the 30th June, 1784, to carry out his plan as a temporary expedient, with the exception of that part which required the Raja not to refuse or delay his authentication to administrative documents, because such a regulation could neither be declared nor enforced with reference to the rights, privileges and dignity of the Raja.⁸⁵ On March 14, 1786, the Court of Directors approved of the arrangement by observing, "as far as we are able to judge, it appears well-calculated to restore the prosperity of the province."⁸⁶

In the middle of July, 1784, Hastings put the new plan into operation. Ali Ibrahim Khan was asked to perform the duties of *amin* in addition to his own responsibilities and Ajaib Singh, the brother of Rani Golab Kaur, took up the office of *naib* on July 29, 1784.⁸⁷

Hastings returned to Benares from Lucknow on September 12, 1784, and found that considerable progress had already been made in the execution of his project.⁸⁸ He stayed at Benares for a few days to confirm by the sanction of his authority the measures already adopted, and "to give solidarity to the system of administration newly established, by habituating the members of it to the exercise of the duties of their respective stations", under his supervision.⁸⁹ He entered into a new *kistbandee* with Mahipnarain, by which he tried

to regulate the demands according to the possible resources of every month.⁹⁰ On September 21, 1784, Mahipnarain paid his respect to the Governor-General and wanted to have some compensations for the privileges which he had given up.⁹¹ Hastings did not concede any extra privilege to the Raja, but confirmed him to "the more secure enjoyment of those he already possessed". He, however, secured the possession of the *pargana* of Kyra-Mungror on the same condition, on which his late grandfather had held it.⁹² The *pargana* of Bhadohi in the *subah* of Allahabad, fetching one lac fifty eight thousand as annual revenue, was also conferred on him as his personal *jagir*.⁹³

On the basis of authority conferred by Hastings, to investigate the title of lands within the *zamindari* and, to make the landholders answerable to him for lands irregularly held or for being more profitable than the avowed valuation, Mahipnarain in July, 1785, complained to Fowke that lands enjoyed by Ausan Singh yielded much larger revenue than the amount fixed for his *jagir*.⁹⁴ The Resident brought this fact to the notice of the Government. But it directed Fowke not to admit any claim to deductions, on these grounds, from the amount due from the Raja without prior permission of the Council and asked him to make best exertions for the recovery of the outstanding balances from Durgvijayi Singh.⁹⁵

On December 26, 1785, Fowke resigned.⁹⁶ Macpherson, the acting Governor-General, accepted the resignation, subject to his explaining clearly the nature of balances due from the Raja.⁹⁷

The third residency of Fowke (March 24, 1783, to December 26, 1785) was not happy, either from the Raja's or from the Company's point of view. He did not realise the arrears from the *naib*.⁹⁸ He amassed money by questionable means.⁹⁹ He appropriated one per cent of *bhuri* (payment made to bankers for advances made by them) which legally belonged to the Raja. He also took *nazrana* and *rusum khazana*. During his residency, Kashmiri Mal, an influential banker of Benares, became very powerful under his patronage.¹⁰⁰ His son was appointed the treasurer of the *zamindari* and the *kachakri* of the Raja was held in his house. The administration of the *zamindari* had virtually passed under the control of this banker who even appointed officers such as *daroghas*, etc.¹⁰¹

On January 17, 1786, James Grant was appointed to succeed Fowke, and on February 8, 1786, he took up the new assignment.¹⁰² On this change, the authorities in England were very hopeful and wrote to the Governor-General on March 27, 1787, "We rely very much on Mr. Grant's promised exertions for the balances of previous year and the regular discharge of the current Tribute without distressing the country."¹⁰³ On April 24, 1786, Mahipnarain wrote to Macpherson, "I am satisfied and I am certain, from his zeal and knowledge in business, that the Company's money will be supplied with ease."¹⁰⁴

James Grant was very energetic and it goes to his credit that, within one year, he realised Rs. Sa 1,95,052-as. 2-ps. 1, which lay outstanding in the account of the Raja.¹⁰⁵

Grant also tried to curb the influence of Kashmiri Mal. His opportunity came when Gopal Das, another prominent banker of Benares, lodged a complaint with him, accusing Kashmiri Mal of misappropriation of Rs. 1,24,460-as. 5-ps. 6. On October 14, 1786, he sent Radhakissan *chopdar* with a *parwana*, asking Kashmiri Mal to appear personally before him. He did not visit the Resident, but sent his *wakil* who was consequently put to confinement. Grant stationed 11 watchmen on the residential-cum-banking house of Kashmiri Mal to the detriment of his prestige as a banker. Kashmiri Mal appealed to the Governor-General that it was a practice with the bankers to settle their accounts among themselves by arbitration. The Nawab of Awadh also requested the Governor-General for permitting Kashmiri Mal to visit him. The Government sent the claim of Gopal Das to arbitration.¹⁰⁶

Complaints began to pour in against Kashmiri Mal from different quarters. As early as April, 1786, Mahipnarain had ardently pleaded for saving him from the clutches of Kashmiri Mal.¹⁰⁷ Kalyan Singh, the son of late Raja Shitab Roy, complained to the Government in November, 1786, that Kashmiri Mal had misappropriated a property worth three lacs of rupees.¹⁰⁸ Pratap Singh, a *zamindar*, alleged that Kashmiri Mal had dispossessed him of his property.¹⁰⁹

On December 2, 1786, Cornwallis authorised Grant to abolish the office of treasurer, and to order all payments of public revenue to be made in the Raja's *kachahri*.¹¹⁰

Grant also brought to the notice of Cornwallis the tricky problem of alienated lands. On December 11, 1786, Cornwallis wrote to Grant, as the alienation of lands in perpetuity in the *zamindari* of Benares was not only repugnant to the rights of the Company, but injurious directly to the public revenue, "all lands in the Zamindary which have been so alienated with or without the Raja's sanction since Mr. Hastings' adjustment in the year 1784, be resumed and the amount thereof to be applied to the liquidation of the old balances of Rs. 3,14,655".¹¹¹ Under the energetic guidance of Grant, the resumption of alienated lands, amounting to Rs. 8,33,619-as. 13-ps. 6, was accomplished by March, 1787.¹¹²

Grant rendered another inestimable service to the Company by settling the rate of exchange between Benares and Calcutta. On February 28, 1786, Grant brought to the notice of Macpherson that the exchange rate of 100 Benares *siccās* was equivalent to Rs. 90-as. 11-ps. 10- Calcutta *sicca*.¹¹³ At the insistence of Grant, a meeting of the bankers was called on April 7, 1786, to make the rate of exchange reasonable. The bankers represented that this difference in the rate of exchange was owing to the evil practice of remitting all bills in cash, which caused a shortage of specie and adversely affected the rate of exchange.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the standard coin in Benares was a *das masā* ; thus for an average Benares rupee, one had to pay the commission twice, once, for bringing it to the level of *das masa*, and for the second time, for converting it to the standard of Calcutta *sicca*. Grant, however, succeeded in persuading the bankers to give up this practice and thus to reduce the rate of exchange to a considerable extent.¹¹⁵

Grant was not satisfied with the arrangement prevailing at Benares and suggested to Cornwallis on April 10, 1787, that improvement of cultivation, proper savings in the *sibandi* expenditure and unreasonable deductions, resumption of alienated lands together with an impartial settlement of lands, and early attention to the culture of opium plants could earn a revenue of five lacs of rupees for the *fasli* year 1195.¹¹⁶ He also recommended a permanent settlement of five years for those *parganas* where cultivation had been neglected, or where severe drought had caused ravages, and estimated that, by making settlement for five years, the total acquisition could

be increased by seven lacs of rupees.¹¹⁷ The Government was not prepared for such radical reforms.

In spite of zeal and enthusiasm of Grant, there was much in his residency to be resented by every right thinking man. Like Fowke, Grant conducted the administration with the aid of favourites who exploited the trust imposed on them to further their own selfish interests.¹¹⁸ If Fowke had given a blank cheque to the banker Kashmiri Mal, Grant did the same to Sher Jang, the *darogha* of the Mint. Sher Jang established a parallel *kachahri* and tried both civil and criminal cases. When Cornwallis visited Benares in July, 1787, he saw with his own eyes that this self-created judge "imprisoned four persons for life." Sher Jang appointed *daroghas* and *peshkars* from among his dependants.¹¹⁹ Grant issued orders to the *wakils* and *amils* that whenever they had any complaint to prefer against *zamindars* and *malguzars*, they would do the same in the *kachahri* of Sher Jang. The existence of a parallel *kachahri* lowered the position and prestige of the Raja in the eyes of his countrymen, and the people came to believe that the business of the country was no more with the Raja.¹²⁰ Sher Jang parcelled out large farms among his dependants. He gave Kulb Ali Khan the entire district of Jaunpore, which constituted one single farm of 17 lacs of rupees.¹²¹ On his interference, Fateh Singh was dispossessed of the *pargana* of Majwar, and it was settled with one Mir Azam, though the latter did not pay anything more than the former.¹²²

In this context, the *amils* had nothing to fear from the *naib*, and the Raja's revenue collection badly suffered. Ajaib Singh became so disgusted with the state of affairs that he expressed his desire in December, 1786, to proceed on pilgrimage by giving up the job of *naib*.¹²³ Grant also interfered with trade and commerce of the province by granting monopolies to his followers. Moreover, he ordered the *daroghas* of the custom-houses to furnish their reports to him and to correspond directly with him; the Raja had no hand even in the working of the custom-houses.¹²⁴ Thus, after the expulsion of Chait Singh, the Raja of Benares had been slowly falling into oblivion and the province became converted into a happy hunting ground for the British Resident and his hirelings.

On February 1, 1787, Mahipnarain lamented to Cornwallis that he had only the name of the Raja, but no authority. He could not appoint or dismiss the officials, and all administrative powers were concentrated in the hands of the Resident.¹²⁵ All *nazranas* paid by the *amils* were appropriated by Grant. He received *bhuri* (payments made to bankers for advances made by them) amounting to Rs. 42,822-as. 12 $\frac{1}{2}$. Mahipnarain further represented that *nisdaat* (any sum taken from treasury upon an engagement to return it after a certain time or to write it off in the account of expenses) of Rs. 51,494 and *bundasht* (whatever things might be ordered from the treasury) of Rs. 33,767 were lying outstanding in the name of the Resident.¹²⁶

Cornwallis did not take any hasty action, but became convinced, as he wrote to Dundas on March 5, 1787, that "Benares on its present system must be a scene of grossest corruption and mismanagement".¹²⁷ The Court of Directors was no less concerned with the distressing situation prevailing in Benares and advised Cornwallis to "make a fixed reduction in the annual amount of his Tribute in proportion thereto, unless objection may arise in your mind to the measure which do not at present occur to us".¹²⁸

On April 3, 1787, Ajaib Singh died and Mahipnarain desired that he should be entrusted with the seal of *huzuri-naibat*.¹²⁹ But Grant kept the same in his custody and appointed Sankar Pandit the officiating *naib*. Again, on April 11, 1787, the Raja sent a representation to the Bengal Government on the state of affairs prevailing in Benares.

Cornwallis now decided to act. The first step that he took was to place the *zamindari* under the Board of Revenue.¹³⁰ As he explained to Dundas on May 17, 1787, "By placing Benares under the Board of Revenue that district will be no longer devoted to the pillage of the friends of the Governor-General".¹³¹ On July 2, 1787, he set out for the province of Benares. On his enquiry into the management of the *zamindari*, he found that Grant had completely set aside the Raja's authority and handed over the government of the country to a "nefarious Mussalman", Sher Jang.¹³² He also saw that the greatest part of the battalions, stationed at Jaunpore, were dispersed over the whole country to prevent the ryots from running away with

their wives and children.¹³³ He also found that Grant “took much more than his predecessors”.¹³⁴

On July 13, 1787, Cornwallis found that, “mutual harmony and spirit of co-operation between” the Resident and the Raja was necessary for the mutual advantage of the Company and the *zamindari*, and this essential requisite was lacking in the Residency of Grant.¹³⁵ So, he decided that, Grant should never be allowed to return to Benares and appointed Jonathan Duncan, one of the Company’s servants of “the most approved Integrity, Experience and Ability”,¹³⁶ the Resident at Benares on a monthly salary of Rs. 5000 *Ba sicca* per month, exclusive of the charges of his establishment.¹³⁷ Cornwallis wrote to the Court of Directors on July 18, 1787, “Since our acquisition of that province, the powers of the Resident have been undefined and his ostensible allowance of one thousand rupees per month so perfectly inadequate to the necessary expenses of his as to make it preposterous to suppose that he could live upon it. Custom had put him in possession of other emoluments and of an influence to an extent, which I consider as incompatible with the prosperity and improvement of Revenue and Commerce of the Zemindary and highly injurious to the general interests of the Company”.¹³⁸

Cornwallis formulated for Benares a new type of administration in which the Raja and his officials would manage the affairs of the *zamindari* without interference on the part of the Bengal Government, as he wrote to Duncan on July 27, 1787, “It is our wish to lay the Foundation of such a plan for the arrangement of the business hereafter, as may constitute the Raja really as well as nominally the principal in all matters of internal details”.¹³⁹

Notes

1. F.S.C., 18 Oct. 1781, No. 12, Hastings to Wheler, 29 Sep. 1781.
2. Dodwell, *Letters of Hastings*, op. cit., p. 82.
3. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 4A, Proclamation, 29 Sep. 1781.
4. F.S.C., 29 Oct. 1781, No. 4, Hastings to Wheler, 18 Oct. 1781.
5. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1, Hastings to Wheler, 21 Nov. 1781.
6. F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 5, Hastings to Wheler, 1 Nov. 1781.

7. F.S.C., 19 Nov. 1781, No. 5, Hastings to Wheler, 5 Nov. 1781. Mahip-narain had to pay Rs. 33,33,333-as. 5- ps. 10 for the *fasli* year 1189 (F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1).
8. Aitchison, *Treaties* etc., II, p. 80.
9. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, p. 414.
10. Aitchison, *Treaties* etc., II, p. 82. For details of settlement see Appendixes to Hastings's letter, 21 Nov. 1781, in F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781.
11. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1, Hastings to Wheler, 21 Nov. 1781, C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 312.
12. F.S.C., 8 Dec. 1781, No. 1. All these *zamindars* had been displaced by Balwant Singh. Ali Azam Khan received a cash allowance of Rs. 10,000 (C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 350).
13. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1. Bandhu Khan acted as a guide to the English army in military operations. He led the commanders through unfrequented routes.
14. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1. Jagannath Singh was the commandant of the 3rd Regiment of *sepoys*.
15. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1. Beniram Pandit, the agent of Mudhoji Bhosla, accompanied Hastings in his flight to Chunar at a grave risk and gave one lac of rupees to him at a time of critical financial stringency.
16. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. P. Appendix to Hastings's letter of 21 Nov. 1781.
17. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1. Hastings to Wheler, 21 Nov. 1781. Also F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. O. Some taxes collected on the strangers were (a) *dustoori pardesi* or duties on strangers, (b) *dallali pardesi* or sum paid by brokers for buying or selling goods to strangers (c) *dustoori angothi* or duties levied on rings bought by strangers and (d) *talasee* or duties for searching the persons travelling to Benares.
18. F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 5. Hastings to Wheler, 1 Nov. 1781. Details of the pay and allowances are found in F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 6, and Proclamation of the Governor-General in F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 7. Hastings was of opinion that Benares was deficient in law and administration. But he does not substantiate his statement.
19. F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 5, Hastings to Wheler, 1 Nov. 1781.
20. Ibid.
21. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, p. 424.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 421. "I lost the Zemindary with a rent of twenty two lacs. I recovered it with a revenue of forty. The Company possessed only its stipulated rent under Cheit Sing. It is now as much a member of their Government as the Zemindary of Burdwan and more effectively theirs than many parts of Bihar."
24. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 296 and 297. After the insurrection at Benares, Ausan Singh was appointed to superintend the affairs of the Raj on August 18, 1781. (C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 212).
25. F.S.C., 5 Dec. 1782, No. (IA) A, the number mentioned as 113 in Procs., vol., Hastings to Council, 23 Jan. 1782.
26. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 459.

27. F.S.C., 8 Apr. 1782, No. 8. Markham to Hastings, 1 Apr. 1782. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 460, dates the incident 2nd April. But it is obviously a mistake. Also C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 467.
28. F.S.C., 8 Apr. 1782, No. 8.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 460.
32. F.S.C., 8 Apr. 1782, No. 9. Council to Markham 9 Apr. 1782. The date of the letter is confusing.
33. F.S.C., 10 May 1782, No. 12, Markham to Council, 30 Apr. 1782. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 467, 468 and 475.
34. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 466 and Trans. P.L.R., Vol. 19, No. 32 pp. 65-66.
35. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 536.
36. Gelig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 585.
37. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 553.
38. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, pp. 585-587.
39. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 553.
40. F.S.C., 4 Dec. 1782, No. 3, Markham to Hastings, 9 Sep. 1782.
41. Ibid.
42. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 617.
43. F.S.C., 4 Dec. 1782, No. 2. Hastings to Markham, 29 Sep. 1782.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. Gleig, *Memoirs of Hastings*, II, op. cit., p. 590.
47. Ibid.
48. F.S. Procs, 4 Dec. 1782, Markham to Council, 14 Nov. 1782. Also see letters of Markham, 24 Oct. and 12 Nov. 1782.
49. C.P.C., VI, Letter Nos. 640 & 641.
50. F.S.C., 4 Dec. 1782, No. 8, Council to Markham, 4 Dec. 1782.
51. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29200, Hastings to Court, 20 Mar. 1783.
52. F.S.C., 24 Mar. 1783, No. 2. Instructions to Fowke.
53. H.P.C., 19 May 1783, No. 20, Fowke to Council, 6 May 1783.
54. F.S.C., 27 Dec. 1783, No. 30, Fowke to Council, 23 July 1783.
55. F.S.C., 27 Dec. 1783, No. 31-32, Enclosures to the letter of Fowke, 23 July 1783.
56. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 455. The letter is wrongly dated and placed in Persian Calendar.
57. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212 ; Hastings' diary No. 2, Petition of Amrow Singh & Bhagwat Singh.
58. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Hastings' Diary No. 2 ; Hastings to Council, 2 Apr. 1784.
59. Ibid.
60. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Representation of Mahipnarain, 16 Mar. 1784.
61. Ibid.
62. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Petition of Rozinadars of Chunar, Benares, Jaunpore and Ghazipore.

63. F.S. Procs., 24 Aug. 1785, Hastings to Fowke, 26 Mar. 1784.
64. F.S.C., 20 Apr. 1784, No. 6, Hastings to Council, 2 Apr. 1784.
65. F.S. Procs., 24 Aug. 1785, Appendix to the letter of Hastings, 26 Mar. 1784.
66. F.S. Procs., 24 Aug. 1785, Hastings to Fowke, 26 Mar. 1784.
67. F.S.C., 20 Apr. 1784, No. 6, Hastings to Council, 2 Apr. 1784.
68. Ibid.
69. F.S. Procs., 20 May 1784, Council to Hastings, 20 May 1784.
70. F.S. Procs., 6 June, 1784, Hastings to Council, 23 May 1784.
71. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29121, Hastings to Council, 13 June 1784.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. F.S. Procs., 30 June 1784, Resolutions of the Council.
78. Ibid.
79. Grier., *Letters of Hastings to his wife*, p. 324.
80. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29121, Hastings to Council, 13 June 1784.
81. F.S. Procs., 30 June 1784.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 28202, Letter from Court, 14 Mar. 1786.
87. C.P.C., VI, No. 1229 and 1230.
88. F.S. Procs., 23 Nov. 1784, Hastings to Macpherson, 21 Sep. 1784.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 1442.
93. C.P.C., VI, Letter No. 1440.
94. F.S. Procs., 26 Aug. 1785, Fowke to Council, 12 July 1785.
95. F.S. Procs., 26 Aug. 1785, Resolution of the Council.
96. F.S.C., 27 Jan. 1786, No. 35, Fowke to Macpherson, 26 Dec. 1785.
97. F.S.C., 27 Jan. 1786, No. 36.
98. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29202, Extract of Court's letter 27 Mar. 1787.
99. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore District*, II, p. 74.
100. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain, 11 Apr. 1787.
101. Ibid.
102. F.S.C., 14 Feb. 1786, No. 11, Grant to Council, 8 Feb. 1786.
103. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29202, Extract of Letter from Court, 27 Mar. 1787.
104. F.S.C., 22 May 1786, No. 29, Mahipnarain to Macpherson, 24 Apr. 1786.

105. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Aug. 1787, Enclosure to the letter of Grant, 19 Aug. 1787.
106. C.P.C., VII, Letter Nos. 814, 815, 816, 833, 834, 863, 879 & 914.
107. F.S.C., 22 May 1786, No. 29, Mahipnarain to Macpherson, 24 Apr. 1786.
108. C.P.C., VII, Letter No. 875.
109. C.P.C., VII, Letter No. 940.
110. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Aug. 1787, Cornwallis to Grant, 2 Dec. 1786.
111. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Aug. 1787, Grant to Cornwallis, 10 Apr. 1787.
112. Ibid.
113. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Aug. 1787, Grant to Macpherson, 28 Feb. 1786.
114. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Aug. 1787, Grant to Macpherson, 7 Apr. 1786.
115. Ibid.
116. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 28 Aug. 1787, Grant to Cornwallis, 10 Apr. 1787.
117. Ibid.
118. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain received on 11 Apr. 1787.
119. Melville Papers, MSS, No. 3385, Cornwallis to Dundas, 16 Nov. 1787.
120. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain, 11 Apr. 1787.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. C.P.C., VII, Letter No. 974.
124. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain, 11 Apr. 1787.
125. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain, 1 Feb. 1787.
126. Ibid.
127. Melville Papers, MSS., No. 3385, Cornwallis to Dundas, 5 May 1787.
128. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29202, Extract of the letter from Court, 27 Mar. 1787.
129. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Representation of Mahipnarain, 11 Apr. 1787.
130. Melville Papers, MSS., No. 3385, Cornwallis to Dundas, 5 May 1787.
131. Melville Papers, MSS., No. 3385, Cornwallis to Dundas, 17 May 1787.
132. Melville Papers, MSS., No. 3385, Cornwallis to Dundas, 16 Nov. 1787.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 July 1787, Minute of Cornwallis, 13 July 1787.
136. Ibid.
137. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 27 July 1787, Resolution of the Council, 27 July 1787.
138. To Court (Pub), 18 July 1787.
139. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 27 July 1787, Cornwallis to Duncan, 27 July, 1787.

CHAPTER VI

CONVERSION TO THE FIFTH DIVISION (1787—1795)

(1) General Administration and Revenue

On August 31, 1787, Jonathan Duncan arrived at Benares¹ with the positive instructions to induce the Raja to attend to the administration of his *zamindari* himself by pointing out the necessity of his personal interference.² On October 5, the Resident proclaimed Mahipnarain to be the sole authority for the collection of revenue. Sankar Pandit, the acting *naib*, was withdrawn and the Raja was asked to conclude the collections of 1194 *fasli* and also to make necessary arrangements for the ensuing year.³ The Raja was required to transact all business by himself in the public *kachahri* and to appoint suitable officials for the conduct of his administration.³ It was reported to the Court of Directors on December 15, 1787, "It will, we hope, afford you satisfaction to learn that the Rajah of Benares has been invested with the management of the affairs of his Zemindarry".⁴

But the Resident imposed certain restrictions on the power and authority of the Raja. He appointed a "Native official", called *sarishtadar*, and 5 *muharrirs* to attend at *kachahri*, on his behalf, for keeping accounts of all transactions made by the Raja. Similar officials were posted to the custom-houses of Benares, Mirzapore, Ghazipore and Jaunpore. He revived the office of *qanungo* in every *pargana*. The Raja was required to provide suitable funds for all these officials who were "under exclusive orders of the Resident and not subject to those of the Rajah".⁵ Duncan took upon himself the duty of "instructing and assisting the amils" in the work of collection.⁶ Duncan advised Mahipnarain to fix "the Fasli year 1187 as the standard" to which the rates and rentals of the country, in general, were to be restored.⁷ The Raja was directed to reduce each *amil's* collection to one or two lacs of rupees.

Thus in the arrangement of October, 1787, the Resident assumed the role of the supervisor of the transactions of the Raja. Whenever

he would disapprove of any act of the Raja, he could interfere and his orders and instructions had to be obeyed.⁸ Sword of Damocles was kept hanging over the head of the Raja by the announcement of the Resident that a *naib* would be again appointed, if the Government would deem it expedient.⁹ Moreover, Mahipnarain was not given a free hand in the appointment of his officials. Sankar Pandit, against whom the Raja had complained on September 2, 1787,¹⁰ was appointed the first *sarishtadar* on behalf of Duncan.

Duncan next took up the question of remissions from the stipulated revenue of forty lacs. The Raja had been claiming deductions of Rs. 2,11,759. The Government had admitted the claim of Rs. 1,43,372 and had reserved the rest for future settlement. On March 27, 1787, the Court of Directors had written to the Bengal Government, "It will be much more satisfactory to fix on a certainty the sum which the Company expect to realise from the Zemindary".¹¹ Duncan also reported to the Government that the sum, remitted on account of several articles, exceeded far more than what the Raja was entitled to by the terms of the orders of Hastings, but these remissions had been either expressly or tacitly confirmed, and the Raja treated them as final.¹² The question before the Council was whether these remissions should be sanctioned by the Government on the ground of subsequent confirmation, or whether a reconsideration should be made of the original account of the remissions. It was indeed a puzzling question, because in the first case, the Government would lose, and in the second, the Raja would complain of the breach of stipulations which had been made in his favour in the past.¹³

On April 11, 1788, the Council resolved to abide by the terms of the orders issued by Hastings on the subject of these remissions, paying at the same time some weight to circumstances which had occurred in the meanwhile. On reconsideration, Rs. 23,165-as. 4 was saved at the cost of the Raja.¹⁴

On February 16, 1788, Duncan brought to the notice of the Government the cases of the *grandeos* who had been enjoying rent-free grants and thus depriving the Government of its legitimate revenue.¹⁵ After examining relevant cases, the general principle was laid down that those who enjoyed *jagirs* should continue to hold

the same, but exception should be made in cases of personal grants. For example, the successor of Govindjit was not permitted to inherit the *jagir* worth Rs. 37,500 on the ground that it was a personal grant.¹⁶

Duncan was not prepared to leave even the task of the revenue collection in the hands of the Raja and made out a case against him for taking it over. Mahipnarain had been entrusted with the work of collection, subject to certain conditions, one of which was that the Raja should not let out large farms to any tax-collector. But the Raja did not follow this instruction to the letter. For example, Kulb Ali Khan, the renter of Jaunpore, was entrusted with a farm of ten lacs of rupees.¹⁷ But none of the tax-gatherers except Mehendi Ali Khan, the farmer of Ghazipore and Saidabad, lodged any complaint about the settlement. But Duncan did not interfere at this stage and reported to the Government, "As there did not appear any material Difference between the Rental now exacted and that in the last year, I did not at the period of settlement think it necessary to interfere between the Rajah and these Renters."¹⁸

Mehendi Ali Khan did not pay the first instalment. Following the usual procedure prevalent in the country, the Raja sent his peons to bring him to the *kachahri*. The renter felt insulted and swallowed a considerable dose of arsenic. By timely medical aid, he, however, survived. Duncan interfered on behalf of this refractory renter, and forced the Raja to grant him a remission of Rs. 25,000.¹⁹ Kulb Ali Khan also pleaded for remission on the plea of exorbitant rents. Mahipnarain strongly objected to the Resident's attending to his demands, lest it would encourage all other renters to claim similar privilege. But Duncan paid no attention to the protest of the Raja and authorised Ali Ibrahim Khan, the chief magistrate of Benares, to effect a compromise. Accordingly, a settlement was made on January 1, 1788, to the effect that he would get a remission of Rs. 25,000 on condition of keeping the transaction secret. But after 45 days, Kulb Ali Khan demanded further concessions. Mahipnarain became uneasy, but Duncan assured him of his full support. The Raja asked for military help from Duncan who directed Neaves, his senior assistant, to help him in collecting the stipulated rent from Kulb Ali Khan. The latter at once paid

two lacs of rupees.²⁰ Thus the pretensions of this renter, regarding his inability, were not well founded.

Duncan had already made up his mind that something must be done. To begin with, he tried to ascertain the actual revenue-yield of the province. James Grant had calculated the total public revenue of the *zamindari* of Benares at Rs. 73,78,321.²¹ After consulting the revenue experts and scrutinising the accounts of last seven years, Duncan found that, after paying forty lacs of rupees, little more than eleven lacs remained as balance to meet all expenses of collection (including the profits of the tax-farmers) and to make good occasional losses suffered on account of natural calamity, to which the country was liable.²² In his estimation the gross revenue of the country, including income from the Raja's *jagirs* and other *jagirs*, was Rs. 57,42,935-as. 14 approximately and the real fund, after deducting the charges of collection, was Rs. 43,42,974-as. 2.²³

The Resident made a circuit of the country²⁴ from January to March, 1788, to form his future plan. He heard the stories of grievances from the inhabitants of the localities which he visited and saw many *parganas* in a state of decadence. Some were left uncultivated. Even the well-cultivated *parganas* were not prosperous.²⁵

The decadent condition of the province of Benares was the product of several factors. In the system hitherto prevalent in the province, the shroffs or bankers could command the Raja and also the Government itself in respect to the realisation of the revenue ; the practice being, each *kist* was to be realised not in cash, but by *dakhilas* or notes payable in certain number of days from the date thereof. And, as the renters were in arrears to the shroffs, they exacted their own terms for the *dakhilas*.²⁶

The mode of payment by the cultivators was also defective. There were two methods of payment, *nakdy* or cash payment, and *batai* or crop sharing on actual produce ascertained by measurement. In case of *nakdy*, there were various *abwabs* which went on increasing since the expulsion of Chait Singh and which amounted to Rs. 2,53,258-as. 1 in 1788. The *batai* system was subjected to severe limitations such as the use of short measures, appropriation of both shares of the crop, overvaluation of the production, etc. Owing to

these defective modes of assessment and payment, the *amils* "fleece" the ryots without conferring any benefit on the state.²⁷

Lastly, it was a general practice of the country to use "Horse and Foot" in the realisation of revenue.²⁸ The *zamindars* and ryots were very turbulent and some of them, particularly the inhabitants of the borders, had a degree of wildness. Local sense of honour also made them resist the revenue collectors. Many petty *zamindars* had mud-forts from where they could defy the Raja. If the *amils* did not take any *sepoy* from the Residency, the local *zamindars* thought, the Raja had no support of the Government and offered resistance. As the Raja was no factor in the eyes of the people, it was a problem to collect the revenues in his name. Duncan wrote on September 12, 1788, "The Natives still wished to adhere to the Residency in everything, and to him in nothing".²⁹ The malady of the province was "natural consequences of a divided authority". The Resident had real power, but no responsibility, whereas the Raja had sole responsibility of collection and general administration, but no power.³⁰

In this background, the Resident proposed to establish such a system of collection as might "leave but little to the Rajah's own hands". He framed a set of elaborate regulations to be imposed by the Raja with effect from the 25th June, 1788. (1) A new *potta* should be delivered to the ryots of all *parganas*. (2) Mode of collection and the length of measurement would be specifically mentioned in the *potta*. (3) Money value of the payment should be determined twice within the year according to the current rates prevalent in the country. (4) All new *abwabs*, introduced since the *fasli* year 1187, should be prohibited. (5) Original rent and existing *abwabs* or cesses should be incorporated under one head.³¹

Mahipnarain was naturally opposed to the application of these regulations, which definitely signified curtailment of his authority. In spite of the best efforts of Duncan, the Raja could not be convinced of the necessity of the changes. On June 25, 1788, defying the objections raised by the Raja, Duncan took upon himself the responsibility of collection of the revenues³² and Mahipnarain became virtually a non-entity in the revenue administration of the province.

On October 3, 1788, the Government approved of the measures taken by the Resident for "the Conduct and Formation of the new settlement," but advised him not to exclude the Raja altogether "from a share in the executive Management".³³ The Government wrote to the Court of Directors on January 9, 1789, "It is certainly a great disappointment to us to find the Rajah so incapable of comprehending the propriety and Necessity of a Total Reform and of carrying it into Execution. The object is, however, of too great Importance to be sacrificed to the consideration of delicacy. We, at the same time, however, acquainted him that it was not our intention by these orders to renounce the original principle of the instructions communicated to him for the restoration of the Rajah to the fullest possible exercise of the functions of his station ; on the contrary, that we consider it as a leading principle in our political connection with the Rajah, which we should be ever happy to revert to".³⁴

Taking upon himself the task of collection, Duncan directed the *amils* to conclude the settlement of 1196 *fasli*, as usual. For the next revenue year, a new form of agreement was prescribed on the 13th December, 1788. He granted leases for one year of those *parganas* where agriculture was flourishing, and settled the impoverished *parganas* for five years.³⁵ He estimated that Rs. 37,45,537-as. 7-0 would be obtained from the land-revenue in the *fasli* year 1197.

By drastically curtailing the expenses of the Raja and by discontinuing the charitable allowances, Duncan made the settlement fetch Rs. 38,08,674-as. 15-ps. 9, but even then, the Raja's stipulated amount fell short by Rs. 1,01,814-as. 15-ps. 4.³⁶

On June 17, 1789, the Government not only approved of the steps taken by the Resident, but also refused to "adopt any measure for supplying the deficiency of Rs. 1,01,814-as. 15-ps. 4 between the settlement and the demand of Government upon Benares which may have a tendency to shake the confidence of the inhabitants in the Government".³⁷ But the Government was fully conscious that, in excluding the Raja from the management of the *zamindari*, it was acting against the spirit of the settlement of 1781, as it wrote to the authorities in England on August 14, 1789, "It was not without reluctance that we adopted measures repugnant to the spirit of the

Pottah by which he holds his Zemindarry, but the necessity of the case admitted no suspence".³⁸

On June 17, 1789, the Government directed Duncan to communicate his views on the expediency and practicability of fixing the demands of the Government on the ryots in perpetuity by introducing the plan of settlement of Bihar into the province of Benares.³⁹ It also wanted to know whether any modification would be necessary, either in view of the differences which might exist in the landed tenures in Benares, or from the relative situation of the Raja, on the one hand, and landholders and cultivators in the district under his authority, on the other. The Council wrote to the Resident, in the event of his being of the opinion that the system might be adopted in Benares with success, he should explain its principles to the Raja and convince him that it would equally tend to promote his own interests and also the happiness of the people.⁴⁰

On receiving these instructions, the Resident tried to make the Raja agree to the introduction of the decennial system. On August 21, 1789, the Raja most reluctantly gave his consent.⁴¹ In November, 1789, the Resident ordered 4 years' settlement with the village *zamindars* and *pattidars*, instead of with the persons who previously had held possession through farming system or claimed it as hereditary right.⁴² On December 26, 1789, Duncan reported to the Government, "I can see no objection to the four years' settlement being for the most part declared permanent to the landholders for following six years which would institute a 10 years' settlement for all the Zemindary of Benares in like manner as is intended for Bihar and Bengal".⁴³

The main obstacles to the proposed settlement were the absence of *zamindars*, and disputed claims over land. For example, the *pargana* of Jhaloopore, which had an extensive area, had only two *zamindars* with whom any settlement could be made.⁴⁴ As to the disputed claims, Duncan solved the problem by permitting the aggrieved party to seek redress in the court of law as the *pottas* were meant to "fix the Rental and constitute no Bar to any of their Right to Property".⁴⁵ The Government had already authorised Duncan to restore with the approval of the Raja the remaining village *zamindars* who were dispossessed of their land "antecedent to the 1st July

1775".⁴⁶ But the Raja did not accept the proposal and reported to Duncan on January 23, 1790, "If the anciently dispossessed zamindars shall be restored, great difficulties would ensue".⁴⁷ Duncan could not approve of the stand of the Raja, because the plan of the settlement had already been consented to by him.⁴⁸

On November 25, 1790, Duncan stated in his report on the settlement that, out of 5000 *zamindars* in different villages, about 3000 had been restored.⁴⁹ The accounts of the settlement of each *pargana* had been subdivided into the following modes, first, with *zamindars*, secondly, with farmers and thirdly, with the *amils* who collected the revenue directly from the ryots.⁵⁰ The portions, which the several parts of the settlement bore to each other, were with *zamindars* $\frac{2}{3}$, with farmers $\frac{1}{4}$ and *cucha* (or where the collection continued to be made directly from the Ryots) $\frac{1}{12}$.⁵¹

On February 11, 1791, the Government accepted the settlement and advised Duncan to extend the four years' *pottas* for next six years so as to convert them into ten years' settlement.⁵²

On receiving the instructions, Duncan took no immediate step, but consulted his trusted officials as to the probable effect of the promulgation of the orders of the Government. Some officials, like Lala Umrao Singh, were opposed to the extension of the settlement, because the four years' *pottas* were not just and perfect.⁵³ On August 27, 1791, the four years' settlement was extended for six following years and were not to be altered except by judicial procedure.⁵⁴

The new settlement improved the collection from land-revenue. The land-revenue in 1198 *fasli* increased by Rs. 1,08,940-as. 11-ps. 6 in comparison to that of the previous year.⁵⁵ The Government recorded on August 17, 1792, "The complete realisation of the increase of Land Revenue assessed on the Zemindary of Benares for the past year, under all disadvantages arising from a most unfavourable season and without distress to the Landholders and Cultivators of soil, affords a convincing proof of the solidarity of your permanent arrangement".⁵⁶ On the third year of the settlement, the total land-revenue increased by Rs. 98,837-4-6.⁵⁷ The actual surplus collection of the *fasli* years 1200 and 1201, after disbursing for impoverished *parganas* like Chowsa and Dhus, amounted to Rs. 2,37, 125-as. 10-ps. 9.⁵⁸

In March 1793, the decennial settlement of the province of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was declared perpetual. But the Raja of Benares with respect to the Government stood upon a very different footing from the *zamindars* of Bengal and Bihar, because his rights had the sanction of a treaty.⁵⁹ But deviations from the treaty had taken place on the plea of better management of public affairs and on inability of the Raja to implement the plans of a healthy administration. And, Duncan had justified the deviations by bringing stability in the economy of Benares. But the success of the regulations for promoting the prosperity of a country ought to depend upon the established system rather than on the personal qualifications of an individual.⁶⁰ Shore observed on March 3, 1794, "The financial and judicial systems now established in Bengal are well calculated to perpetuate the Benefits resulting from the existing administration in the province of Benares, provided it is deemed to be consistent with our engagements with the Rajah to transplant them there".⁶¹

On March 7, 1794, the Resident was asked to ascertain the state of the Raja's mind and disposition towards a concurrence with the projected alteration of the system for the province of Benares and to use his best endeavours to convince the Raja of the benefits that the introduction of the Government's plan of administration was calculated to secure to the country.⁶²

It was difficult for Duncan to make the Raja agree to this proposal, for the latter had been thoroughly dissatisfied with the English authorities. On December 5, 1790, Mahipnarain had requested the Government that either the administration of the province should be made over to him, or the '*mushara*' of the Raja and his dependants, which Hastings had estimated at Rs. 6,30,401, should be annually paid to him.⁶³ The Government could not determine anything on the Raja's request for the allowance and also on his suggestion for reinstatement to the management of the country, as the measures, which had been since pursued for restoring the prosperity of the country, were yet in progress and under a state of trial.⁶⁴

On March 12, 1790, Mahipnarain in company with his adviser, Dalip Singh, visited the Resident and, in the course of his convers-

dion with him, mentioned that the *pargana* and fortress of Bijaygarh belonged to him by virtue of his personal inheritance.⁶⁵ On March 14, 1790, Rani Golab Kaur, the maternal grandmother of the Raja, sent a formal petition to the Resident requesting him to hand over the said *pargana* to Mahipnarain on the ground that the same had been purchased by her husband, the late Raja Balwant Singh.⁶⁶ But Duncan rejected the prayer on the plea that the Raja had never been in possession of the said fort and *pargana* since his accession.⁶⁷

Regarding Bijaygarh, the Raja did not get a fair deal, as the fort had been purchased by his maternal grandfather in A.H. 1167 for Rs. 50,000 from Vijay Singh.⁶⁸ And, the general principle of settlement in Benares was to reinstate all *zamindars* who had been ousted antecedent to 1775,⁶⁹ and the family of Balwant Singh had been holding the fort of Bijaygarh since 1753.

Duncan had also irritated Mahipnarain by unduly interfering with the marriage of his son. On March 2, 1791, Mahipnarain informed Duncan that he would soon celebrate the nuptials of his son and sought the permission of the Resident for the same.⁷⁰ Duncan took no objection and wrote to the Government to contribute as much as possible to the expenses of the marriage which would prove extremely gratifying to the Raja as well as to the family and would "tend strongly to strengthen their affectionate attachment"⁷¹ But, just seven days before the celebration of the said marriage, when Duncan came to know that the bride was the daughter of Fateh Sahi, a rebel *zamindar* of Bihar, who had supported the cause of Chait Singh during the disturbances in Benares, he did not approve of "the improper choice". He asked the Raja to postpone the marriage for fourteen days and in the meantime solicited the opinion of the Government.⁷² The Raja represented that the bride in question had no connection with his father Fateh Sahi since the death of her mother and lived with her maternal grandfather Pahalwan Singh, a *zamindar* of Benares.⁷³ The Government on June 17, 1791, did not apprehend that any "bad consequence" would result from the match and permitted it to be consummated.⁷⁴

Under this context it was difficult to convince the Raja of the advantages that would be derived from the introduction of a new system. The Raja considered the prevailing arrangement in which

the Resident had become his co-adjutor "as temporary".⁷⁵ The Resident was trying to curtail the little legal authority which remained with the Raja, whereas the Raja was expecting to get back the management of the *zamindari* in the near future from the hands of the Resident.⁷⁶

Lala Sukh Lal, the Raja's chief *mutasaddi*, proposed to Duncan that he could make Mahipnarain agree to the change, if the Raja's signature to the *pottahs* and other revenue papers were allowed to continue as at present. As the signature on these papers was purely a matter of form without implying any control or interference on the part of the Raja, Duncan willingly accepted the suggestion.⁷⁷

On July 23, 1794, Sukh Lal visited the Raja at Ramnagar with a view to obtaining his consent. After a prolonged conversation, Mahipnarain, however, accepted the proposal of introduction of the permanent settlement in Benares.⁷⁸ Rani Golab Kaur pointed out that Hastings had concluded a treaty with the Raja to the effect that the surplus receipts of the country would be enjoyed by him. So her grandson was entitled to the surplus revenue by virtue of this treaty.⁷⁹

On the basis of Lala Sukh Lal's talk with Mahipnarain, Duncan reported to the Government on July 25, 1794, that the administration of "his family districts and estates" should remain unimpaired "as at present", the new system should not be introduced in those places and the surplus, after discharging the Company's revenue, should belong to him; but the Raja would not object to the Government distributing the surplus revenue, as they might think it expedient for the benefit of the province.⁸⁰ But, the Raja's signature must be affixed on all revenue papers of the *zamindari* of Benares.⁸¹

The Government on September 19, 1794, expressed satisfaction with the Raja's liberal conduct with regard to the unqualified assent which he had given to their recommendations, and especially with his unconditional submission of the appropriation of the surplus revenue to their determination.⁸² The Government held that the surplus annual revenue should be regularly paid to the Raja after deducting the expenses of the judicial establishment, "maintenance of the Hindoo College, making of roads, bridges or other works for the improvement of the Zemindary".⁸³ To obviate all future

misunderstanding, the Government asked the Resident to settle with the Raja the sum to be paid annually to him.⁸⁴ The Government also prepared an outline of the new land-revenue system of Benares.

The revenue fixed in perpetuity should never exceed the highest amount payable by existing engagements. It must be settled with the ancient *zamindars* who still retained proprietary rights in the land and also with *kabuliyatdars*, and where there were no *kabuliyatdars*, the existing leases of the farmers must remain in force, but the proprietors should have the same option of entering into engagements as was allowed to the *zamindars* in Bengal. To avoid inconvenience of entering into engagements with numerous *pattidars* or shareholders, they were asked to appoint a manager on their behalf. In the *parganas* where there were no village *zamindars*, a settlement might be made with "head cultivators" or the district might be divided into small farms. The *zamindars* and farmers were to pay their rents to the public treasury at Benares and receive *dehyk* and *bhuri* accordingly. The collection of the revenue of the *zamindari* of Benares should be committed to a Collector, subject to the authority of the Board of Revenue, in the same manner as his counterpart in the provinces. His power was restricted to the collection of the fixed revenue, to the making hereafter of the settlement of land-revenue which was not fixed at present, and to the discharge of all other functions connected with finance.⁸⁵ The Government wrote to Duncan on September 19, 1794, "we are of opinion that the fundamental principle of this Regulation viz. that the Collector and his officers shall be liable to be prosecuted personally for every exaction exceeding what they are authorised to demand under engagements of the *Cubbooleatdars*, may with equal advantage be extended to Benares."⁸⁶ The *amils* collecting revenue were to be designated as *tehsildars* and were divested of all responsibility for the payment of revenue.

The Government suggested two broad changes to the system prevalent in Bengal. First, some police duties would be left in the hands of the *tehsildars* who were also authorised to decide minor cases. Secondly, as "the Duties of the Resident at Benares" were "not only judicial and financial but also political," the Senior Judge of the Court of Appeals should act as the political representative of the

Government and as such he would be designated an agent to the Governor-General.⁸⁷ The Government wrote to Duncan on September 19, 1794, "It is our intention that the Zemindarry of Benares shall be considered as a Fifth Division and that the Judicial and Revenue Establishment shall with certain exceptions, be the same as in each of the Divisions in the Provinces."⁸⁸

On October 13, 1794, Duncan informed the Government that the annual surplus, after liquidating the tribute of 40 lacs from the funds of the province and after defraying the expenses of the charges of the collection, judicial establishments and of the Hindoo College etc., would "never at any future year fall below one lac and forty thousand rupees."⁸⁹ Duncan proposed, if one lac of rupees was annually paid to the Raja, the remaining surplus could be disposed of by the Government for multifarious welfare projects.⁹⁰ Duncan was averse from introducing permanent settlement in those *parganas* like Nerwan, Chowsa, Dhusa etc., where the present settlement had failed.⁹¹ Duncan also held that in case of arrears there was "no necessity for proceeding as within the Provinces to the Alienation of their Landed Property by Public sale" and opined that instead of putting the lands of the *zamindars* in arrears to public sale, the collector would keep them as *khass*, until the proprietors gave security not only to pay up the balance but also for the future *jama*.⁹² As to the appointment of managers, on behalf of the *pattidars*, Duncan did not support the proposal as it would lead to various complications.⁹³ He made settlement with the *pattidars* and converted some villages into *bhaichara* villages.

In accordance with the instructions of the authorities in Calcutta, a treaty was signed between the Raja and the Government on October 27, 1794, for the introduction of the same system of administration, as had been established by Cornwallis on May 1, 1793, in the province of Bengal. The important clauses of the treaty were :

(1) Out of the surplus revenue over and above 40 lacs of rupees, the Raja would get one lac annually from the treasury, exclusive of the income from his personal *jagirs* and *altamghas* that were in his possession, and the remaining surplus could be spent by the authority of the Company's Government towards the charges of civil and judicial establishments, the maintenance of the Hindoo

College, repair of roads, construction of bridges, promotion of cultivation, etc. (2) A Collector for the realisation of the revenue of the province of Benares would be appointed. (3) All complaints, relating to revenue by persons living within the Raja's *jagir* and *altamgha*, should be settled jointly by the Raja and the Collector. If the disputes were not thus settled, the decision of the Government would be final. (4) All *pottas*, receipts, *farighkhattis* etc., which had been issued under the seal and signature of the Raja to the *amils*, *zamindars* and farmers, would remain in force and would be continued as usual.⁹⁴

The signing of this treaty clearly shows that the Raja of Benares was something more than a mere *zamindar*. The treaty of October 27, 1794, did not abrogate the original treaty of 1781,—it rather modified it.

On the 13th July, 1795, the Government accepted the regulations framed by the Resident, in accordance with the suggestions of the 19th September, 1794.⁹⁵ Regarding the contention of Duncan for having a separate code for Benares, Shore opined on the 13th July, "One Regulation would be sufficient in lieu of two.....there will be one uniform code for the internal Government of our Bengal dominions exhibiting both now and hereafter in different numbers, the general and local rules as applicable to all or any of the four provinces or subdivisions".⁹⁶ The Government decided to bring the whole of the Bengal possessions including Benares under one code.⁹⁷

By a proclamation issued on May 27, 1795, the decennial settlement was declared permanent in Benares.

Broadly speaking, the permanent settlement of the Benares province differed in four respects from that of Bengal. (i) In Bengal, there was no survey and no record of rights; in Benares, the districts were cadastrally surveyed and a complete record of rights framed. (ii) In Bengal, the settlement was always made with some landlord or *zamindars* and never with village communities. In the Benares province, the settlement was made with "village zamindars"; with the landlords of joint-villages, some of which were *bhaichara* communities. (iii) The *qanungoes*, who had no legally recognised functions in Bengal, continued in Benares, and to support them "in

the full exercise of their functions", they were particularly mentioned in the written engagements, entered into on the part of the Government with landlords. (iv) Lastly, the *tehsildars* and *zamindars* were required to discharge some police duties and minor judicial functions.⁹⁸

(ii) Judicial Administration

Under the arrangement of 1781, the Raja of Benares was the fountain-head of justice throughout the province, except the city of Benares, where the chief magistrate, directly under the Bengal Government, was entrusted with the administration of justice. In other places under the *zamindari*, the *amils*, on behalf of the Raja, administered justice. The highest court of justice was called the *moolki adalat* which functioned under the direct supervision of the Raja.

On July 27, 1787, the Government authorised Duncan to suggest reforms in the administration of justice, if he considered such measures necessary.⁹⁹ On October 5, 1787, Duncan advised the Raja to divest the *amils* of the judicial duties and to provide for the judicial administration separately by "appointing native judges of good character".¹⁰⁰

On October 19, 1787, the Government invested the Resident with general control over the administration of justice in the province of Benares and directed him to establish new courts under him for the towns of Ghazipore, Jaunpore and Mirzapore and to reform the *moolky adalat* of the Raja.¹⁰¹

Duncan welcomed the proposal "as a safe beginning" to what might gradually become hereafter "a more perfect and extensive system for the administration of justice throughout the interior parts of this Country".¹⁰² He was personally convinced of the necessity that "some kind of Magistrate" should be appointed in the three important towns for the "sake of keeping the peace" and for trying "numerous small causes" that might arise among the inhabitants.¹⁰³ But he could not take immediate step to execute the project for two difficulties ; in the first place, it was not yet decided whether the Raja or the Government should defray the expenses of the judicial establishment of the three towns, and in the second place, it was

difficult to get “any native in whom any dependence” could be placed “for the due and uncorrupt discharge” of any judicial function.¹⁰⁴

On November 20, 1787, the Government decided that the charges of the establishment and allowances of the judges should be debited against the accounts of the Raja and asked Duncan to appoint judges as soon as he could find suitable persons.¹⁰⁵

Duncan established a court for the town of Ghazipore on January 27, 1788, and appointed Maulvi Amirullah the judge and magistrate of the same.¹⁰⁶ He was empowered to try both civil and criminal cases. He could inflict the punishment “as far as” 20 stripes or a week’s imprisonment without referring the case to the Resident. But, in cases requiring more severe punishment, he was to forward a copy of the trial¹⁰⁷ to the Resident and pass sentence with his approval. In civil cases, it was to function as the court of first instance.

In accordance with the system prevalent in Bengal, he was required to adjudicate by the personal law of the defendant in civil cases and by the laws of the Koran in criminal cases.¹⁰⁸ The judge was forbidden to hear cases relating to revenue and to interfere in any way either with the business of the collection of revenue or with the custom-houses.¹⁰⁹

The judge was to maintain regular proceedings with specification of the date of receipt of each application and the orders and decisions thereon, duly sealed copies of which were to be forwarded monthly to the Resident.¹¹⁰ The *kotwali* fee which was trifle in amount was abolished. The *kotwals* were instructed to take appropriate measures for apprehending criminals in the town and to get them punished by this court. The monthly expenditure of this court was fixed at Benares *sicca* Rs. 744.¹¹¹

The court of Ghazipore began to function from the 1st February, 1788.¹¹² Duncan was not satisfied with snatching away from the hands of the Raja the administration of the justice for the town of Ghazipore only. If his plan received approbation of the Government, he wished to adhere, as nearly as possible, to the same scheme in future establishment of the courts at Jaunpore and Mirzapore.¹¹³ Duncan also expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Raja’s judicial

institution at Benares called the *moolky adalat* and desired to adopt "a better plan" for it.¹¹⁴

On February 29, 1788, the Government approved of the establishment of the civil and criminal court and magistracy at Ghazipore and also of the appointment of Maulvi Amirullah as the judge and magistrate of it.¹¹⁵ Regarding appeals from the decision of this court, the Government authorised the Resident to hear them in all civil cases, provided they were preferred within two months after the delivery of the judgements.¹¹⁶ Disputes, exceeding one thousand rupees in valuation, were made appealable to the *sadar dewani adalat* in accordance with the regulations for the administration of justice in the Company's provinces.¹¹⁷ The Resident was asked to establish two courts, one, at Jaunpore and the other, at Mirzapore as early as possible on the same plan on which the court of Ghazipore had been set up.¹¹⁸ The Government also felt the need of reforming the *moolky adalat*, as it wrote to Duncan on the 29th February, 1788, "We consider it Highly Incumbent on this Government to see that it (Moolky adawlut) is regulated in such a manner as is adequate to the protection of Lives and property of the people. We, therefore, desire that you will propose to the Rajah that he should receive your advice for the Establishment of a better plan for conducting this adawlut".¹¹⁹

On March 15, 1788, the regulations framed for the court of Ghazipore were extended to the town of Jaunpore, and Mufti Karimullah was appointed the judge and magistrate of the said town.¹²⁰ On March 30, 1788, Duncan appointed Lala Baskhi Singh the judge and magistrate of Mirzapore "with the same sunnud and nearly with the same establishment."¹²¹

These three courts thus established, along with the court already existing for the city of Benares took away from the hands of the Raja his authority of dispensing justice over the principal towns of his *zamindari*. But the *sadar dewani adalat* had no appellate jurisdiction over the court of the city of Benares. Duncan wrote to the Government on April 14, 1788, "To render the jurisdiction of the Sudder Adawlut, which the Government has vested in me, I conceive that it would be proper to extent the authority of the latter in respect of appeals to the Court of the Town of Benares."¹²²

On April 30, 1788, the Government resolved that appeals from the decisions of the city court of Benares would lie before the Resident in the same manner as those from Ghazipore or Mirzapore.¹²³ The Resident sought clarification from the Government on July 7, 1788, whether the new court of appeal at Benares should have a retrospective jurisdiction previous to its institution, and if so, from what date it should commence.¹²⁴

On August 6, 1788, the new court of appeal under the Resident was authorised to hear appeals from the decrees in all cases, whether of a civil or criminal nature passed by the court of the chief magistrate at Benares, from the date of the "arrival of the present Resident" in the same manner as from the judgements of the courts of Ghazipore or Jaunpore or Mirzapore.¹²⁵ Thus over all the four city courts of the province of Benares, the appellate jurisdiction of the Resident was established.

In accordance with the advice of the Government, Duncan paid attention to the *moolky adalat* of the Raja and found that the Raja incurred only a nominal expenditure for the expenses of this court of justice ; only Rs. 201 was allotted for the *faujdari* branch and Rs. 567 for the *dewani* division.¹²⁶ Moreover, the establishment was too small to cope with the administration of justice of the entire country.¹²⁷ On May 15, 1788, Duncan increased the establishment and also the salary of the Raja's judicial officials, and asked the Raja to allot Rs. 1235 for the *dewani* and Rs. 879 for the *faujdari* division of the *moolky adalat*.¹²⁸

Duncan also limited the jurisdiction of the *moolky adalat* by interfering with cases pending before it. Duncan, for example, asked the Raja to transfer a case, relating to a theft committed within the "Lines of Chunar," to the city court of Benares from the *moolky adalat*, on the ground that the Raja's court had no jurisdiction to take cognizance of crimes committed within the boundaries of Chunar.¹²⁹ Duncan interfered in another instance where a resistance was offered to the Company's *sepoys* by "a tumultuous Band of Natives". He transferred the case to the city court of Benares on the plea of "effectual trial."¹³⁰

On September 12, 1788, Duncan reported to the Government that the *moolky adalat* of the Raja was hardly adequate to meet the

requirement of the general administration of justice throughout the country, even if the Raja and his officials exerted their utmost¹³¹ influence. Though Duncan was convinced of the necessity of the complete abolition of this institution, yet he did not recommend such a course as it would "greatly irritate the Rajah". He advised the Government to bring about a moderate reform by making the *moolky adalat* liable to the Resident's inspection and its proceedings appealable to the Resident, in the like manner as the other courts throughout the province of Benares.¹³² He also proposed to institute from the beginning of the *fasli* year 1196, a Court of Revenue, the sole duty of which should be to hear and decide all disputes that would arise in course of the year between the ryots and *amils* or collectors.¹³³ This court was to be composed of two judges, one, to be appointed by the Resident, and the other, by the Raja. This bench, thus constituted, should hold its court in the office of the Resident under his direct control and supervision.¹³⁴ Thus Duncan tried to grasp all judicial functions of the Raja, only leaving him a nominal authority over his *moolky adalat* as the court of first instance. He was, of course, conscious that these judicial reforms would no doubt hurt the Raja. Duncan wrote to the Government on September 12, 1788, "I am in all cases as willing to support and consult, as he (the Raja) can himself desire, where I think them at all compatible with our National Honour and Interest."¹³⁵

On October 3, 1788, the Government approved of all these proposals of Duncan.¹³⁶ Accordingly, Duncan signified to the Raja that henceforward appeals against the decisions of the *moolky adalat* would lie before him. The Raja was asked to apply the personal law of the defendant in civil cases and the Islamic law in criminal cases.¹³⁷ Thus, generally speaking, the laws applied to the Company's provinces became operative in all courts of Benares.

In course of time, Duncan tried to remove some of the glaring defects in the criminal law, as administered in Benares, and gradually, the laws operative in the Company's dominions came to be introduced into Benares.¹³⁸ Formerly, the Brahmins enjoyed many immunities, but this practice came to be modified to a great extent.

With the introduction of the permanent settlement in Benares,

radical changes in the administration of justice were suggested. On September 19, 1794, Shore proposed that two courts of judicature for the trial of civil and criminal cases in the first instance should be set up. The courts would be denominated the court or *adalat* for the southern *zilas* of Benares and the court or *adalat* for northern *zilas* of Benares. The judges of these *zila* courts would be magistrates in their respective jurisdictions.¹³⁹

Another court for the city of Benares was to be established and to be superintended by one judge with the powers of a magistrate.¹⁴⁰ For hearing appeals from the decisions of these lower courts and for trials of crimes and misdemeanours of a serious nature, a civil and a criminal court was to be established under the denomination of the provincial court of appeal and the court of circuit for the division of Benares.¹⁴¹ With respect to two *zila adalats* and the city court of Benares, their status should be exactly the same as those of the *zila* and city courts in the provinces with only one exception,¹⁴² that is, in case of the division of Benares, the year of the expulsion of Chait Singh should mark the period of limitation, whereas in the provinces, it was the date of the grant of *dewani*. Same rules of appeal from the judgments of the provincial court to the *sadar dewani adalat* were to be applied to those from the decisions of the provincial courts of appeals in Benares.¹⁴³

The magistrate of the city of Benares and of the two *zila* courts should have the same authority as was given to the magistrate in the provinces, and the court of circuit was to function in the same way as its counterpart in the provinces, with a proviso that no Brahmin should be sentenced to death for capital offences ; but in lieu of that extreme punishment, the Brahmin culprit would be liable to transportation for life.¹⁴⁴

Duncan did not accept the proposal of establishing two *zila* courts and a city court for the Benares division. He stressed the need for establishing four courts roughly corresponding to the four *sarkars* of the province of Benares.¹⁴⁵ He also contended that, in the case of Benares, appeals from the decisions of the provincial court should lie to the *sadar dewani adalat* for one half of the appealable amount of the provinces.¹⁴⁶ Shore accepted the first suggestion, but ruled out the second on the ground that "the advantages of

admitting a further appeal to the court of last resort would be more than counter-balanced by serious and extensive evils."¹⁴⁷ .

On October 27, 1794, Mahipnarain and the Government entered into a treaty, as a result of which from the beginning of 1202 *fasli*, the administration of justice, which had hitherto remained in the hands of the Indians, were to be conducted by English gentlemen.

In the middle of September, 1795, the new judicial system came into force in Benares. Accordingly, a judge and magistrate was appointed at each of the following *sarkars* : Benares, Mirzapore, Ghazipore and Jaunpore and a collector for the whole of the province. A court of appeal and circuit was established at Benares. The Residency was abolished and the senior judge of the court of appeal and circuit assumed the duties of the agent to the Governor-General.

Thus, Benares was converted into the Fifth Division of the Bengal Presidency.

Notes

1. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787.
2. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 27 Jul., 1787.
3. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Extract of the procs of Resident at Benares, 5 Oct. 1787.
4. To Court (Rev.), 15 Dec., 1787.
5. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Extract of the procs of the Resident at Benares, 5 Oct. 1787.
6. Ibid.
7. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Extract of the procs of the Resident at Benares, 7 Oct. 1787.
8. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Extract of the procs of Resident, 5 Oct. 1787.
9. Ibid.
10. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 20 Sept., 1787, Application of Mahipnarain rec'd, 2 Sep. 1787.
11. From Court (Rev.), 27 Mar., 1787,
12. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Apr., 1788, No. 44.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid. For the item *adalat* the Bengal Government fixed the Raja's remission at Rs. 652-as 8, in place of Rs. 10,000 ; for *kotwali* Rs. 5000 in place of Rs. 12,000 ; for *nikas*, the Raja was to get the benefit of Rs. 167-as 4. instead

of Rs. 1202, for *khomar khana* Rs. 150 was granted in place of Rs. 889 ; for commission on the sale of rings Rs. 15 was sanctioned in place of Rs. 98 and for *talasee* Rs. 700 was granted in place of Rs. 2000.

15. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Apr., 1788, Duncan to Council, 16 Apr., 1788,
16. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Apr., 1788.
17. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct. 1788, Duncan to Council, 12 Sep., 1788.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
21. Firminger, *Fifth Report*, p. 471.
22. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Duncan to Council, 12 Sep. 1788.
23. Ibid.
24. C.P.C., VII, Letter No. 319 & 370.
25. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Duncan to Council, 12 Sep., 1788.
26. Ibid. Jai Narain Ghosal speaks of the *mahajans* of Benares in his *Kasi-Varnana* ; see also Barlow's report on trade and coinage in H.P.C., 26 Dec., 1787.
27. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Duncan to Council, 12 Sep., 1788.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Council to Duncan, 3 Oct., 1788.
34. To Court (Rev.), 9 Jan., 1789, para 41.
35. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 June, 1789, Duncan to Council, 26 Apr., 1789.
36. Ibid.
37. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 June, 1789, Council to Duncan, 17 June, 1789.
38. To Court (Rev.), 14 Aug., 1789.
39. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 June, 1789, Council to Duncan, 17 June, 1789.
40. Ibid.
41. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 21 Oct., 1789, Duncan to Council, 2 Oct., 1789.
42. Saletoore, *Selections from Banaras Records* p. 185.
43. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 Jan., 1790, No. 44, Duncan to Council, 26 Dec., 1789.
44. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Feb., 1790, Duncan to Council, 1 Feb., 1790.
45. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 13 Jan., 1790, No. 44, Duncan to Council, 26 Dec., 1789.
46. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 23 Dec., 1789, Council to Duncan, 23 Dec., 1789.
47. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Feb., 1790, No. 56, Mahipnarain to Duncan, 23 Jan., 1790.
48. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Feb., 1790, Duncan to Mahipnarain, 23 Jan., 1790.
49. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Feb., 1791, No. 4, Duncan to Council, 25 Nov., 1790.
50. Ibid., the third mode of settlement was called '*amany*'.
51. Ibid.

52. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Feb., 1791, Council to Duncan, 11 Feb., 1791.
53. Oldham, *Historical and Statistical Memoirs of the Ghazipore district*, II, pp. 152-154.
54. Ibid., p. 155.
55. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 Aug., 1792, No. 42, Duncan to Council, 4 Aug., 1792.
56. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 Aug., 1792, No. 43, Council to Duncan, 17 Aug., 1792.
57. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 7 Nov., 1794.
58. Ibid.
59. F.S.C., 3 Mar., 1794, Minute of Shore, 3 Mar., 1794.
60. Ibid.
61. Ibid.
62. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 7 Mar., 1794, No. 63, Resolution of the Council, 7 Mar., 1794.
63. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Feb., 1791, No. 6, Mahipnarain to Council, rec'd 5 Dec., 1790.
64. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Feb. 1791, No. 8, Resolution of the Council, 11 Feb., 1791.
65. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Feb., 1791, No. 3, Extract of the procs of Resident at Benares, 14 Mar., 1790.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.
68. *T.T.*, p. 33.
69. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 23 Dec., 1789. Council to Duncan 23 Dec., 1789.
70. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 25 Mar., 1791, No. 25, Petition of Mahipnarain, 2 Mar., 1791.
71. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 25 Mar., 1791, No. 24, Duncan to Council, 4 Mar., 1791.
72. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 Jun., 1791, No. 1, Duncan to Barlow, 9 Jun., 1791.
73. Ibid.
74. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 June, 1791, No. 1, Resolution of the Board.
75. Jud. (Civil) Procs, 19 Sep., 1794, Duncan to Shore, 25 July, 1794.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Jud. (Civil) Procs, 19 Sep., 1794, No. 4, Enclosure to the letter of Duncan, 25 July, 1794.
79. Ibid.
80. Jud. (Civil) Procs, 19 Sep., 1794, Duncan to Council, 25 July, 1794.
81. Ibid.
82. Jud. (Civil) Procs, 19 Sep., 1794, No. 6, Govt. to Duncan. 19 Sep., 1794.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 24 Oct., 1794, No. 20, Duncan to Council, 13 Oct., 1794.
90. Ibid.
91. Jud. Procs (Civil), 17 July, 1795, No. 15, Duncan to Council, 20 Oct., 1794.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid., Duncan pointed out, in the first place, the general settlement had already been concluded without appointing a manager. Secondly, numerous disputes cropped up between *pattidars* and their manager as had happened in the *pargana* of Kurrenda. Thirdly, dissatisfied *pattidars* were at liberty to establish their claim in civil courts.
94. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements, Sanads* etc., II, p. 86.
95. H.P.C., 13 July, 1795, No. 4, Minute of Shore 13 July.
96. Ibid.
97. Ibid.
98. Firminger, *Fifth Report*, pp. 83-84, Ascoli, *Early Revenue history of Bengal*, pp. 189-196, Mishra, *Land Revenue Policy in the United Provinces*, pp. 43-50.
99. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 27 July, 1787, Instructions to Duncan, 27 July, 1787.
100. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Extract of the procs of the Resident at Benares, 5 Oct., 1787.
101. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 19 Oct., 1787, Resolution of the Council, 19 Oct., 1787.
102. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 20 Nov., 1787, Duncan to Council, 12 Nov., 1787.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 20 Nov., 1787, Resolution of the Board.
106. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Extract of the procs of the Resident, 27 Jan., 1788.
107. Ibid.
108. Ibid.
109. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Duncan to Council, 6 Feb., 1788.
110. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Extracts of the procs of the Resident, 27 Jan., 1788.
111. Ibid.
112. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Extract of the procs of the Resident, 1 Feb., 1788.
113. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Duncan to Council, 6 Feb., 1788.
114. Ibid.
115. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 29 Feb., 1788, Council to Duncan, 29 Feb., 1788.
116. Ibid.
117. Ibid.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.

120. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 26 Mar., 1788, Duncan to Council, 15 Mar., 1788.
121. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 11 Apr., 1788, Duncan to Council, 30 Mar., 1788.
122. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 30 Apr., 1788, Duncan to Council, 14 Apr. 1788.
123. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 30 Apr., 1788, Resolution of the Council, 30 Apr., 1788.
124. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 6 Aug., 1788, Duncan to Council, 7 July, 1788.
125. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 6 Aug., 1788, Council to Duncan, 6 Aug., 1788.
126. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 Dec., 1788, Extracts of the procs of the Resident at Benares, 15 May, 1788.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 6 Aug., 1788, Duncan to Council, 7 July, 1788.
130. Ibid.
131. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Duncan to Council, 12 Sep., 1788.
132. Ibid.
133. Ibid.
134. Ibid.
135. Ibid.
136. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Council to Duncan, 3 Oct., 1788.
137. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 3 Oct., 1788, Extract of the procs of Resident at Benares, 30 Nov., 1788.
138. B.R.D., G.-G.-in-C., 17 June, 1789, Case of Bhowani Bakshi may be noted.
139. Jud. (Civil) procs, 19 Sep., 1794, No. 6, Shore to Duncan, 19 Sep., 1794.
140. Ibid.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Ibid.
145. Jud. (Civil) Procs, 17 July, 1795, No. 15, Duncan to Council, 20 Oct., 1794.
146. Ibid.
147. H.P.C., 13 July, 1795, No. 4, Minute of Shore, 13 July, 1795.

CHAPTER VII

COMMERCIAL RELATIONS OF THE ENGLISH EAST INDIA COMPANY WITH BENARES (1764—1795)

Trade and tariff :

The unique commercial advantage of the province of Benares over every other part of India arose from the sanctity of its capital which rendered it the resort of the aged, the pious and the wealthy Hindus from far off quarters and thus led to a constant influx of money. Hastings wrote to Wheler on November 1, 1781, "Its temples are held in particular veneration by the professors of Hindoo religion who flock to it on occasional pilgrimages from the remotest parts of Hindostan, and many, who have acquired independent fortunes, retire to close their days in a place so eminently esteemed for its sanctity"¹. Many illustrious and virtuous Hindus of the 18th century India like Ahalya Bai, Rani Bhavani and others deemed it their bounden duty to build temples and rest-houses and perform various religious rites and charities in Benares and thus contributed to its prosperity.² Even the Muslims recognised the sanctity of the place, as Shaikh Muhammad Ali Hazeen, the celebrated scholar and a contemporary of Balwant Singh, wrote,—

Az Banāras narawam mabad-e-aām ast inja
*Har Brahman pīsarē Lachhman-O-Rām ast inja.*³

(I am not going away from Benares, because it is the worship place of all ; every Brahmin is the son of Lachhman and Ram at this place).

The province of Benares, having a population of nearly three millions in 1789-1790,⁴ had within its territory some of the largest towns, markets and manufacturing centres. Valentia recorded that the number of permanent inhabitants of the city of Benares was approximately 5,82, 625.⁵ Alexander Deane who passed through Benares in early nineteenth century, wrote that it was "one of the largest cities in India and perhaps the richest".⁶ Kindersley noticed

in 1767 that a large number of people in the city of Benares was engaged in weaving and manufacturing, and observed that it was "a great manufactory of gold and silver, silks and gauzes ; they are costly".⁷ Malet reported on August 8, 1788, that "several families of Gujarat Silk manufacturers, Sowcars and others" had fled to and settled in Benares where they practised their former occupation.⁸ Jai Narain Ghosal, in the concluding portion of *Kāsikhanda* (C. 1800 A.D.) noted different kinds of cloths manufactured in Benares as such :—

Kimkhāp⁹ jāmdāni śāḍi¹⁰ ekpātā¹¹ |
Sāmla¹² gudaḍ¹³ tār pare dhanukpātā¹⁴ ||
Kārchhob¹⁵ e sakal jaridār hay |
Dvisata paryanta thān mūl vinirmay ||
Śāḍi dhuti upārthā reśmipāḍi jari |
Parantu reśmipāḍ reśam-kināri ||
Apar likhiba golbadan¹⁶ masāru¹⁷ |
Harek prakār bāb phulam¹⁸ amāru¹⁹ ||
Sādāte reśam-pāḍi kata ranga kare |
Suddha sādā atyuttama karite nā pāre²⁰ ||

Benares was celebrated for the beauty of silk and cotton manufactures, particularly for superfine *muslins*, *kamkhwabs* (a silk cloth variegated with gold, silver and various coloured silk thread), gauzes (white and coloured) either spotted, sprigged or striped with silver or gold, cloths and turbans decorated with gold or silver threads and tinsels. Kindersley was charmed by "the exquisite fineness" of of the *muslins*, and regarding filigree, she observed, "This is a work which required great delicacy and patience ; it is not perforated like the filligrance made in Europe, but the gold and silver is cut into long pieces like fine threads and folded together with such extraordinary neatness that it is impossible upon the most curious examination to discover by what means it is joined. It is extremely light, but still vastly expensive, for the labour costs about ten times as much as the material".²¹ About the ornamented silk cloths and embroidered gauzes of Benares, Valentia remarked, "I understand that more are manufactured here than at any other place in India and that they are not only used in the East for dresses of ceremony,

but are exported in considerable quantities to Europe. I conceive that the trade of gold and silver stuffs, not a little assist in keeping up the prosperity of Benares".²² According to Jai Narain Ghosal, the cost of some specimens of cloth manufactured in Benares rose up to two hundred rupees per piece. Benares was also a good market for purchasing diamonds, pearls and other precious stones, articles of ivory as well as shawls.²³ Mirzapore was also a very flourishing trade-centre. Bijay Ram Sen, a Bengali physicians who visited Mirzapore in 1769, wrote that in the mart of Mirzapore "there were plenty of commodities, and one could find whatever one desired".²⁴ It was particularly noted for its carpets, *satranchis*, chintzes, pottery (both of stone and clay), grinding stone, stone-chips, etc.²⁵ Ghazipore, which was celebrated throughout India for the wholesome air and the beauty and extent of its rose-gardens, was also reputed for the manufacture of linen cloth, particularly used for shirt and bed-sheets which, besides being "beautifully fine", were very durable.²⁶ *Attar* of roses and rose-water were manufactured there in great perfection.²⁷ Jaunpore, once the *shiraj* of India, was still a very flourishing city with big bazaars and was famous for perfumed essence and fragrant oil, chiefly *bela* oil.²⁸ Sandal wood-boxes and different types of toys were beautifully executed throughout the province of Benares.²⁹

The central situation of this province among different trading centres of India was destined to add to its commercial importance. The greatest part of trade carried on between the Company's provinces and other parts of India must pass through this province.³⁰ The traders of the Deccan, the western provinces, and even of Nepal, Tibet and Kashmir resorted to the markets of the province of Benares in search of European commodities and rich manufactures of Bengal. The merchants of Bengal visited the marts of the province for purchasing the products of the interior provinces of Hindustan and even of the neighbouring countries.³¹ The mart of Mirzapore was the meeting-place, where the traders from the Deccan, northern and western provinces resorted to for the sale of their commodities and purchase of manufactures of Bengal and the productions of northern countries like Nepal and Tibet.³²

The British victory at the battle of Buxar (23 October, 1764,)

lighted up the prospects of their commerce with the province of Benares and also with the Deccan, the northern and western provinces through it. On November 26, 1764, the authorities at Fort William decided to establish a factory at Benares.³³ On June 21, 1765, the Select Committee instructed Clive to obtain facilities from Shujauddaula for carrying on free trade with his dominions.³⁴ But on the face of stubborn opposition of the Nawab, this demand had to be withdrawn and the final treaty of Allahabad did not contain any clause³⁵ regarding free trade. The Bengal Government, naturally, decided on February 6, 1766, to withdraw the Benares factory altogether.³⁶

If the official commercial link between Benares and British India could not be established, private wires of traders had already connected it with the Company's dominions. After the treaty of Allahabad, some of them sought permission of the Bengal Government for allowing them to stay there. On February 24, 1766, the authorities at Fort William considered one such application from Bolts, the number two in the Benares factory. His prayer for staying in Benares was rejected, but he was permitted to return to Benares in a private capacity and to settle his affairs by July 1766.³⁷

In the Chapra conference (June 1766), it was agreed that Balwant Singh should dislodge the English merchants trading in his country ; but the Raja, being averse from taking any drastic step, informed them privately of the proposed measures³⁸

Bolts stayed at Benares beyond the time prescribed ; consequently, he was warned on July 28, 1766, if he would not return from Benares by the 28th August, 1766, he would lose his service. Instead of carrying out the orders, Bolts prayed for further indulgence and he was suspended from his service with effect from August 28, 1766³⁹. The authorities at Fort William also informed him, if he did not return to Calcutta by October 10, 1766, he would be forcibly sent off by the President of the factory at Benares. Consequent on the orders, Issac Sage, the chief of Benares factory, waited on Balwant Singh at Durga Kund and urged him to stop the business of Bolts. But the Raja sent private intelligence to Bolts asking him to roll up his business.⁴⁰

The episode of Bolts is significant for more reasons than one. It

shows that private European merchants were reluctant to leave Benares. Strangely enough, the Raja of Benares helped these foreign traders in various ways and did not object to their trading in his country. The authorities at Fort William, who had nothing to gain from the private trade, tried their best to stop it.

Owing to the stiff attitude of the Bengal Government towards the private English merchants, they had to leave the province of Benares, but they left behind their *gumashtahs* who continued to carry on the old trade on their behalf. The presence of the *gumashtahs* of "these gentlemen" caused considerable inconvenience and irritation to the government of the Nawab, who brought to the notice of Col. Richard Smith in December, 1767, several instances of excesses committed by them in the *zamindari* of Benares and requested him to free his country of "the Armenians and the Natives of Bengal."⁴¹ Frequent grant of *parwanas* and *dastaks* had also annoyed Balwant Singh.⁴² Smith became convinced and urged the Select Committee to take vigorous measures for entirely abolishing "a system" which was "so fraught with pernicious consequences and which had so lately proved almost fatal to the Company's welfare in Bengal."⁴³ In accordance with these recommendations, the Government issued orders in February, 1768, for recalling the *gumashtahs* who had been employed in the territory of Balwant Singh.⁴⁴

These orders of the Government put the English traders in a flutter. Thomas Rumbold, the chief of the English factory at Patna, wrote to the Select Committee on April 10, 1768, that, as a result of the orders of the Council, the *gumashtahs* had been put to severe hardship, for the *pykars*, knowing the short period of their stay, evaded the payment. He also complained that the Raja had seized some of his *gumashtahs* and demanded duties from them. The work of Dinapore cantonment suffered considerably, as the *chaukidars* of Balwant Singh had detained timbers sent by the agents for its development.⁴⁵ Francis Sykes, the chief of the Kasimbazar factory, also pleaded for the continuance of *dastaks*, as the Benares trade had been beneficial to Bengal.⁴⁶

The Government was quick to realise the disadvantages resulting from the immediate recall of the *gumashtahs* of the English

merchants and on April 27, 1768, permitted them to stay in the territory of Balwant Singh for a period of two months more for the settlement of their business and the collection of outstanding balances.⁴⁷ The *gumashlahs* were, however, strictly forbidden to enter into any new transaction.⁴⁸ The Raja was asked to assist them in settling their accounts.⁴⁹

When the private English traders were thus winding up their affairs, one Mons Canonji had been increasing his trade in French commodities at Mirzapore.⁵⁰ The Government took exception to this, but the Raja of Benares contended that he could not take any step against this merchant, because he held *dastaks* from the *nawub-wazir*.⁵¹ Getting a clue from the Council, the Raja tried to pack him off, but the Bengal Government intervened and allowed him one month's time for the settlement of his engagements.⁵²

The period of Balwant Singh, as a whole, was one of brisk commercial activity which had reached its zenith in the post-Plassey period. Mirzapore now became a mart for the supply of raw cotton to Bengal from other parts of India. Francis Fowke observed on March 19, 1776, "This mart (Mirzapore), before a considerable one, became much more so after the battle of Buxar, which, while opening an intercourse with the English, produced a traffick in Europe and China articles and a more intimate connection and Commerce with the Hon'ble Company's Province."⁵³ In the early years of Balwant Singh's administration, Benares had a profitable trade with Nepal; the *sannyasi* merchants used to export piece goods of Bengal to Nepal through Benares, in return for which they imported gold bullions of four or five lacs of rupees per year to that province.⁵⁴

After the death of Balwant Singh, the apprehensions of the English officials in Bengal that their commerce with these countries would be "much impeded to the great detriment of the Native merchants living under the Company's protection" made them sponsor the candidature of Chait Singh.⁵⁵ And, in the early years of Chait Singh's administration, the English Governor and some Englishmen received concessions in the matter of trade duties, similar to what had been enjoyed by the Raja's own friends.⁵⁶

When Hastings was about to set out for Benares to make a new

treaty with Shujaudaula, the Council on June 23, 1773, instructed him that "a free intercourse of Commerce" with the *nawab-wazir's* dominions "ought to form an article" and he was asked "to pay the greatest regard" to "the regulation of this commerce, with respect to the mode of carrying it on and the duties to be paid."⁵⁷ Notwithstanding his best efforts, Hastings failed to convince Shujaudaula of the benefits of free trade between the Company's provinces and his dominions. The *nawab-wazir* was apprehensive that the current specie of his country would be drained as a result of such an intercourse with the English.⁵⁸ He further alleged that Mirzapore and other places had been ruined by the trade with the English, that "formerly" lead and iron were found cheap and in abundance at Mirzapore and that at Benares, the ryots were oppressed "for the supply of coolies" by the dependants of the English gentlemen.⁵⁹

Hastings did not press the point further, as his commercial objectives could be secured through the Raja of Benares, in whose territory lay the mart of Mirzapore and the main objects of British trade interests.⁶⁰ On September 7, 1773, Hastings concluded a commercial treaty with the Raja, by which the articles of broad cloth, copper and lead should pass duty-free to the mart of Mirzapore, and on all other goods Chait Singh should indiscriminately collect duties at an equal rate, from everybody.⁶¹ It was also agreed that "specially recommended" Englishmen might stay in the province of Benares.⁶² These men were obviously engaged in trade pursuits and some of them were attracted to the lucrative diamond trade.⁶³

At the directions of the Bengal Government, Chait Singh showed considerable favours to the private English merchants and permitted many of them to carry commodities to the province of Benares without charging any duty from them.⁶⁴

After the treaty of Fyzabad (21 May, 1775), Francis Fowke was commissioned on August 24, 1775, to inquire into trade and commerce of the province of Benares.⁶⁵ He studied the problem for long seven months, and on March 19, 1776, reported to the Government that the trade of the province showed visible signs of decline after the commercial agreement of 1773.⁶⁶

This decline was partly owing to the disturbed political situation prevailing in northern and central India and consequent general impoverishment of the country, and partly to impolitic impositions, faulty system of levying duties and mode of collections. The duties were levied whimsically on the *tunjee* or bullock-loads and not on the valuation of the commodities. For example, one *tunjee* of dry ginger, worth Rs. 26, had to pay a duty of Rs. 9, whereas one *tunjee* of raw silk, the value of which was Rs. 2,340, had to pay only Rs. 23 as duty. "The more valuable commodities" paid nominal duties, whereas "the more bulky and commonly more necessary" articles were heavily taxed.⁶⁷ Moreover, the duties were levied at three different places—Ghazipore, Benares and Mirzapore, and this circumstance subjected the traders to unnecessary delays. Fowke suggested, if the duties were levied only at Benares and Mirzapore, it would expedite the intercourse of traffic, and by placing the customs officers immediately under the eyes of the Government, the Raja could prevent the irregularities and offer speedy redress of the grievances of the merchants.⁶⁸ He recommended that the duties upon goods, which were brought from the Company's provinces, forming by far the greatest part of the imports, might be collected only at Benares, through which they must necessarily pass on their way to Mirzapore.⁶⁹ Fowke opined, "Had the duties levied been lighter and had there been a fixed uniform medium of commerce in a pure and unadulterated Coinage, the country would enjoy a flourishing trade."⁷⁰ Fowke also advocated the abolition of the pilgrim tax which was levied on the Hindus who flocked to Benares for performing sacred rites. Fowke wrote on March 19, 1776, "Could this impolitic tax be removed, the quantity of money which they were compelled by their Religion to give away in Charity here, would very much tend to the enrichment of the Zemindarry."⁷¹

The observations of Fowke did not receive the attention which they deserved, and things were allowed to drift. Graham, the Resident at Benares, freely indulged in commercial ventures and gripped the monopoly of trade in such articles as saltpetre and opium⁷² and thus encroached on the authority of the Raja. The English traders, too, were not happy over the state of affairs in Benares. On April 25, 1777, the Board of Trade reported to the

Council, "We cannot point out any particular Instances of Obstruction and Difficulties thrown in the way of Trade of private merchants in Rajah Cheyte Sing's Districts, but we have often heard it remarked in general that the Rajah's Officers do exact exorbitant Duties on Goods, and Zemindars at different Chaukis made a practice of detaining Boats and obliging the People in them to pay Toll at pleasure".⁷³ In early June, 1779, Chait Singh was informed that his officers collected duties arbitrarily on various articles of merchandise which passed through their *chaukis* and was asked to fix a uniform rate of duties on all commodities and to order his officers to adhere strictly to it.⁷⁴

While making the settlement with Mahipnarain in November, 1781, Hastings abolished all "discreditable and impolitic" taxes, such as duties on sale of horse, revenue paid by the keeper of gaming house, etc.⁷⁵ He also discarded various taxes on strangers such as duties levied on pilgrims, duties taken for searching the strangers and taxes paid on sale and purchase of rings.⁷⁶ These taxes were nominal in amount, but extremely irritating to the visitors. As Hastings wrote on November 21, 1781, "The abolition, in itself a popular Act, extends its influence to every part of India entirely to repay the loss arising from it by the Enducement (Sic) which it will afford to greater Numbers to resort to Benares in proportion to the Indemnity it presents to them".⁷⁷

On November 22, 1781, Hastings abolished the old system of collection, which was in proportion to the load and not according to the value of articles.⁷⁸ The duty was to be levied at the rate of five per cent on the price of the goods and it was accordingly notified.⁷⁹ The customs on merchandise was to be collected only at three stations namely Benares, Mirzapore and Ghazipore by the duly appointed officers of the Raja, instead of by the farmers of revenue.⁸⁰

These rules and regulations of commerce, though evidently founded on better principles,⁸¹ suffered from some flagrant errors. On some articles the duty of five per cent being "too heavy", it adversely affected the commerce between Bengal, and the Deccan and other inland provinces of Hindustan. On March 20, 1782, Markham informed the Government that, as a result of heavy duty

levied in the province of Benares, the Maratha merchants and others, who used to bring their goods to Mirzapore and from there to carry them by land to the distant places, found it more profitable to carry their merchandise through Ramgarh than to pay the heavy duty of five per cent.⁸²

On April 8, 1782, the Government agreed to Markham's proposal that the duty of five per cent on certain articles was an "unreasonable increase," and reduced it to two and a half per cent on the following article i.e., saffron, cinnamon, mace, clove, nutmeg, cochineal, raw-silk, broad-cloth, Europe iron, steel and copper.⁸³ On April 30, 1782, Markham duly notified these reductions.⁸⁴

When Hastings visited Benares in April, 1784, the merchants and the *naga sannyasis* represented to him that a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on raw silk was fixed by the *hukmnama*, but the officials levied a duty of 5 per cent on silk piece goods, as a result of which the trade in silk goods came to a standstill.⁸⁵ They also pointed out that a duty of 15 per cent was levied on white and black cow-tails from Nepal, though the market price of white cow-tail was only two rupees per seer and that of black cow-tail was one rupee and eight annas per seer, and consequently, the half of the price being lost in paying the duties, the sale of cow-tail was at an end.⁸⁶ Moreover, the Deccani merchants were subjected to double duties—both the buyer and seller had to pay a duty of 5 per cent on the same goods.⁸⁷ Further, no protection was afforded to the merchants against road robbery, and the customs officials exacted a variety of oppressive duties on traders such as *nazrana*, an extra duty of two annas on the sale of cotton, etc.⁸⁸ On August 26, 1784, Hastings called for a report from the Resident on the grievances of the merchants.⁸⁹

On October 21, 1784, Hastings promulgated a set of regulations for the management and collection of customs duties on the imports and exports of the province of Benares. Collections at unauthorised *chaukis* in contravention of the orders of the 22nd November, 1781, was strictly forbidden and the duties were to be collected only at Ghazipore, Benares and Mirzapore by the officers of the Raja, especially appointed for this purpose, and not by the farmers or contractors of taxes.⁹⁰ The officers of three *chaukis* might set up

outposts with a view to checking smuggling of goods. The merchants were to receive *rowannahs* under the seal of the custom-houses after the payment of the proper duties. For the transport of commodities from one place to another, either by land or by river, a passport from one of the three *chaukis* was to be deemed sufficient and no additional duty or fee was to be demanded. As to the rate of collections, the regulations of November, 1781, remained operative for all commodities except silk piece goods, manufactured in Bengal and imported from there, which was reduced to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The table of market rates of November, 1781, was to hold good in all cases, except in cases of cow-tails; the price of white cow-tail was fixed at Rs. 4 per seer and that of black cow-tail at Rs. 3 per seer. Prices, not mentioned in the table of rates, were to be valued according to the prevalent market prices.⁹¹

After framing elaborate regulations for trade and commerce, Hastings appointed Lala Champat Rai the *darogha* of the custom-house at Benares on a monthly salary of Rs. 400. The new *darogha* faced considerable difficulty from one Motiram who had been dismissed by him. Motiram tried to get his men appointed to the key-posts of the customs-house by influencing the Raja and his manager, Ajaib Singh. The Government took up the case of Champat Rai and asked the Raja not to interfere with the affairs of the new *darogha*.⁹²

But hindrances to the trade of the province were still there. Mir Hadi, the *darogha* of Mirzapore, complained in March, 1785, that Col. Ahmuty had issued a *parwana* prohibiting the *chaukidars* and *guzarbans* from collecting duties from traders who visited different parts of the *sarkar* to bring provisions for the army. Other traders took shelter under this *parwana* and refused to pay legitimate duties.⁹³ Champat Rai reported that the *kotwal* of Colonelganj forbade traders of the camp to pay any duty to the *chaukis* for commodities, brought either by land or water, and that Sadasiva Mishra, the *mahaldar* of stone, fire-wood and timber of Chunar, did not allow the traders to carry timber from Latispore, Ahraura, and other places and forcibly purchased them at the *chauki* of Lakha and imposed a duty of two annas per bullock-load of wood on those who had refused to sell the same to him. He also reported that

consequent on these illegal interferences, the prices had gone up and the repair of houses had come to a standstill for the high prices of timber.⁹⁴

The Residency of Grant constitutes a retrograde in the history of Benares trade. The Resident granted Harris a monopoly of trading in sugar. This badly affected the trade and commerce of the province, because of this monopoly, the Deccani marchants, who brought cotton and other articles for exchanging them with sugar, left the practice of visiting the province.⁹⁵ Grant also gave a monopoly of trading in lime to Ramchand Pandit.⁹⁶

To obviate these difficulties, the Government asked Barlow on the 9th May, 1787, to investigate effectively the trade and coinage of the province⁹⁷ and ordered Duncan on the 18th May, to depute one of his assistants to reside at Mirzapore for receiving complaints from the merchants and transmitting the same with comments to the Resident. The expenses of this office were to be met by a voluntary payment of 4 annas per Rs. 100 on the duty of the goods exported or imported by the merchants at Mirzapore.⁹⁸

On August 24, 1787, Barlow submitted his report on the trade and commerce of the province of Benares. He found that most of the regulations of October, 1784, had been glaringly violated, and double duties, various exactions and fees were collected arbitrarily. The inland trade had to face many impediments such as *choora*, *zamindari* duties, etc., and there were about 400 *chaukis* for collecting these unauthorised duties.⁹⁹

Barlow suggested that the regulations of October, 1784, should be strictly enforced, the *sonah mahal* should be abolished and duties on all shawl goods should be reduced to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the value mentioned in the invoice.¹⁰⁰ He observed, "It is strange that the Rajah of Benares should be allowed to take advantage of his country and to levy a duty of five per cent on the Trade of Bengal and Bihar on an enhanced valuation of goods, while the Company themselves collected only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the prime cost".¹⁰¹ He also suggested that all goods imported from Bengal and Bihar into Benares, whether for immediate exportation or for consumption in the district, should pay the duties upon the price inserted in the Company's *rowannah*.¹⁰² As to inland duties, he advised total

abolition.¹⁰³ For the promotion of cotton trade, he recommended some understanding with the *nawab-wazir*.¹⁰⁴

Even before the report of Barlow could be placed in the Council, the Resident at Benares had implemented some of its recommendations. On October 7, 1787, Duncan abolished the *zamindari* or *rahdari* duties collected by the *amils* and farmers of revenue.¹⁰⁵ The Raja readily agreed to the proposal even without demanding any deduction, though he was to suffer a considerable loss of revenues.¹⁰⁶ On the 19th October, the Government approved of the steps taken by the Resident.¹⁰⁷

But it was very difficult to make the orders effective. Many *zamindars* were prepared to stab themselves or swallow poison rather than agree to the abolition of these duties. Duncan deputed *sepoys* to take action against these refractory *zamindars*.¹⁰⁸ On April 2, 1788, he posted *sepoys* to all sensitive places like Rajapore, Banby, Tera, etc., to protect merchants from *rahdari* and other illegal duties imposed by the *zamindars* of Mirzapore district.¹⁰⁹ Even in March, 1789, Cornwallis found that, notwithstanding the positive orders of the Board for their abolition, "these exactions had greatly injured the export trade of Bengal, especially in the articles of raw silk, piece goods and European commodities", and the Raja and his officials connived at the continuance of this evil practice of extortion.¹¹⁰ To make the abolition of these *rahdari* and *zamindari* duties more effective, Duncan specifically mentioned in the *pottahs* given to *zamindars* that they would not collect anything over and above the land-revenue.¹¹¹

On December 26, 1787, the report of Barlow, which opened "a project of extending the Commercial Interests of the Company and Country to a degree as yet unknown", was considered by the Government, and it recommended that the Resident should be asked to grant *rowannahs* in the same form and subject to the same regulations as those issued by the collectors of the custom-houses in the Company's provinces and to enforce the same registers and same system of maintaining account as in the provinces; the duties on merchandise from the Company's provinces, passing through Benares to western India, or to the Deccan, or imported into that district for consumption, should be reduced to 2½ per cent (that

being the rate of duties collected by the Company themselves on their own exports as well as on goods imported from Benares).¹¹²

But Duncan did not carry out all the recommendations. As a man on the spot, he modified them to a considerable extent and implemented some of the suggestions offered by the Government. He directed on the 25th February, 1788, that duties on all silk and silk piece goods imported from the Company's provinces should be collected at the rate of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, but on cotton piece goods, a duty of 5 per cent would be levied on the price recorded in the Company's *rowannah* and not on the valuation given in the Book of rates.¹¹³ He also reduced the duty on shawl goods to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to be levied on the price mentioned in the invoice. This measure was destined to encourage the merchants of Kabul, Multan, Lahore and the Punjab.¹¹⁴ On all other goods exported from Benares, the duty still remained 5 per cent on the recorded price. Duncan also abolished the farm of *Sonah mahal*, double duty levied at Mirzapore, the fee on hired boats and the *rahdari* duties for the protection of the properties of the merchants on the roads.¹¹⁵

The Council on March 26, 1788, approved of all the steps taken by the Resident, but not the duty of 5 per cent to be levied on "other goods" exported from Benares by the Raja.¹¹⁶ It was of the opinion that the heavy duty of 5 per cent on an enhanced valuation of the merchandise was a great incumbrance to the inland trade and that it deprived not only the Company, but also the Raja of numerous advantages that would have resulted from an extended commerce and an uninterrupted inland navigation.¹¹⁷ It was deemed "inconsistent with reason and good policy" that the Company would levy a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on goods exported to Benares and the Raja would levy a duty of 5 per cent on the commodities imported from Benares to the territories of the Company. But nothing was done in a hurry, as that might affect the pending negotiations with the Nawab of Awadh.¹¹⁸

In accordance with the instructions of the Government on March 31, 1788, Duncan framed new customs regulations for introducing some kind of uniformity between the Company's provinces and Benares and also for checking overvaluation and unnecessary detention.¹¹⁹ The form of the *rowannahs* issued in the custom-houses of

the province of Benares became same as those issued in the Company's provinces. The *rowannahs*, issued by any of the Government custom-houses for goods to be exported to Benares, should be treated as valid throughout the province of Benares and the Benares *rowannahs* were entitled to the same privilege in the Company's provinces. In Benares, the custom-houses were to collect duties on the valuation specified in the Company's *rowannah* and officials in the Company's provinces were to collect duties according to the specified value in the Benares *rowannah*.¹²⁰

Elaborate arrangements were made for making these regulations effective. The custom-house at Patna was abolished and in June, 1788, one at Manjhighat was set up for collecting duties on goods exported from and imported into the Company's provinces.¹²¹ A *chauki* was established in the confines of the province of Bihar to stop all boats laden with goods attempting to go out of the Company's provinces to Benares without a valid *rowannah*.¹²²

But still breaches of the regulations were committed. The *darogha* of Ghazipore custom-house represented to the Resident that the goods imported from Bengal and Bihar under the Company's *rowannah* were, almost in all cases, found to exceed in weight as well as in quantity.¹²³ Duncan ordered that, on all such excesses, "double duties" should be imposed and a fresh *rowannah* for the province of Benares should be granted. He wrote to the Government on June 6, 1788, "were this country and Bengal and Behar considered entirely as forming one whole, in like manner as the last mentioned Provinces are, I see no Reason, why, such excess of the merchandise imported from them, into this Zemindary should not occasion confiscation of the whole, on the same Principle that such a surplus on a Benares Rowannah does within this Zemindary and in Bengal and Behar within those Provinces".¹²⁴

The Government instructed Duncan on July 2, 1788, that the goods, which might be stopped in passing an authorised *chauki* in the province of Benares without a valid *rowannah*, or which, upon examination, should not correspond with the *rowannahs* taken out for the same, should be liable to total confiscation or to double duties, as the exigencies of the situation might require.¹²⁵

The abolition of *rahdari* and *zamindari* duties adversely affected

the trade of the mart of Mirzapore where the Deccan merchants had got alarmed for their security at the prohibition of the fees for their protection.¹²⁶ Duncan, however, to allay their apprehension, appointed regular guards to be posted on the road from the frontier of the province to the mart of Mirzapore, which was a dangerous locality covered with hilly tracts and jungles.¹²⁷ Moreover, the bazaars of Mirzapore and Vindiyachal suffered from an obnoxious tax, called the *ghardiwari* or *khanasumari* which was collected from grain merchants, oilmen, dealers in cloth, traders in kiln-grain and others for occupying the ground in the market. Duncan pleaded for the abolition of this tax "on profession and industry".¹²⁸ On July 2, 1788, the Government accepted the contention of the Resident.¹²⁹ Notwithstanding these rules and regulations, the merchandise imported from the Company's provinces to the *zamindari* were still subjected to many unauthorised impositions.

But obstructions to commerce in the dominion of the Nawab of Awadh far exceeded those in the province of Benares. The merchants were liable not only to oppressions, and exactions of the customs officials, but also of all *zamindars* and renters who had assumed to themselves the right of levying tolls on all goods passing through their respective jurisdictions. The amount of these exactions depended on the "Ability of the merchants to resist the Demand".¹³⁰ The pernicious effects of these abuses affected the trade of the Company's dominions, the produce and manufacture of which were detained and charged with multiplied impositions and these overcharges either absorbed the profits of sale or enhanced the prices of the commodities to such an extent as the exported commodities became useless for trade.¹³¹ On November 16, 1787, Cornwallis wrote to Dundas, "As the inland trade of our provinces and especially Benares was in a defective state, I thought it would be best to form a commercial treaty with the Vezier which should increase the whole and regulate the duties from northern boundary of Rohilkhand to the mouths of the Ganges".¹³² Moreover, the interests of the British Dominion in India were so blended with Awadh that the English authorities in India were called upon "no less by consideration of private advantage than by regard to honour and credit of the nation to pay most liberal attention to every public measure" that

might tend to its prosperity.¹³³ Cornwallis observed in his minute of the 4th March, 1789, "The British Dominion in Bengal and those of the Vezier abounding with valuable Commodities and Manufactures and possessing Advantages of an extensive inland navigation, it appeared to me that His Excellency could be prevailed upon to accede to some general arrangement for the protection of the Merchants ; their natural industry would soon establish a flourishing Inland Commeree from which his Dominions as well as our own must derive the most important and lasting advantages".¹³⁴ Accordingly, a commercial treaty was signed with the *nawab-wazir* in July, 1788, by which the English Company tried to fix the rate of duties in its territory and in Awadh on imported goods, to adopt a set of regulations for estimating the value of merchandise and to secure a ready means for redressing the grievances of the agrieved party.¹³⁵ The treaty provided that all merchandise, coming whether from Awadh or Benares or the Company's provinces, should be accompanied by a valid *rowannah* issued by an appropriate authority and the duties should be levied on the price recorded in the same and that cotton, coming through or from the territory of the *wazir*, and silk and cotton piece goods, manufactured in Awadh, should pay a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The value of cotton was also fixed at Rs. 6 per maund. The export duty on stones passing through Awadh was lifted. And, on all other goods, the import and export duties were to be paid as before.¹³⁶

After the conclusion of this treaty, the customs master at Mirzapore proposed that an officer with two peons should be posted at Patwaripore on the confines of the Company's, the *wazir's* and Raja Udwant Singh's dominions. Duncan readily accepted the suggestion and directed the said official to report all cases of molestation to the customs master at Mirzapore.¹³⁷

Cornwallis had high hopes of the success of this treaty and observed on March 4, 1789, "A free and uninterrupted Commercial intercourse will be established between the British Dominions in Bengal and the Territories of His Excellency the Vezier and the other Western Provinces of Hindostan."¹³⁸

But hopes were soon belied. Much inconvenience was felt by the merchants in procuring *rowannahs* from the Nawab's custom-

houses for the goods imported from Awadh. Thus, Duncan had to permit the merchants on May 21, 1789, to import goods without *rowannahs* from the country of the *wazir* on payment of old rates of duty. This deviation from the treaty was a temporary measure with a view to introducing regularity and strict conformity.¹³⁹

On October 2, 1789, Duncan found that the receipts from customs had not increased in proportion to what was expected and only Rs. 8703-as. 5-ps. 6 had been collected in excess of the revenue of last year and this sum was less by Rs. 16,296-as. 10-ps. 6 from the estimate.¹⁴⁰

On December 20, 1789, at the instance of the collector of the custom-house of the Nawab at Foolpore, Duncan accommodated the importers of goods by land from Awadh, by authorising those who brought their goods under the Nawab's *rowannah*, to proceed directly to one of the four custom-houses of the *zamindari* of Benares without paying any kind of duty and taking out an appropriate *rowannah*.¹⁴¹ But this relaxation being abused, the advantage was cancelled in March, 1790, and the importers were ordered to bring their goods to the first authorised station and not to move with their commodities, unless they had obtained necessary *rowannahs* for the province of Benares.¹⁴²

The custom-houses in the Nawab's country often did not record the value of the commodity, but only the rate on which the duty had been collected. This caused considerable difficulty for calculating duties on goods, such as saltpetre, etc.¹⁴³ The Resident on the 4th February, 1790, issued a circular whereby all goods imported from Awadh (except those exempted by the treaty) should pay a duty of 5 per cent according to the table of rates prevalent in Benares, if the valuation was not properly specified in the *rowannah*.¹⁴⁴

The commercial treaty with the Nawab had put the merchants from the Deccan and Bundelkhand, frequenting Mirzapore, to a disadvantage, because they had to pay more than Rs. 15 for a maund of cotton than those who made Awadh the channel of their commerce.¹⁴⁵ In order to put them on the same footing with those who transported cotton to Bengal through the Nawab's country, on March 11, 1790, the valuation of their cotton was reduced to Rs. 8 from Rs. 10 per maund.¹⁴⁶

Another grievance of the merchants of Mirzapore was regular theft which occurred in the mart or on the roads leading to it. On the Resident's visit to the mart, they represented, it was the age old tradition of the country that the *amils* had to make good the losses suffered by the merchants in their jurisdiction.¹⁴⁷ Realising the necessity of more effectively providing for the security of the trade, and also of relieving the merchants of an unreasonable burden, the Resident on March 13, 1790, introduced a complete line of watchmen on the roads from the frontiers of the *zamindari* to the mart of Mirzapore.¹⁴⁸ To facilitate trade and commerce of this mart, in March, 1790, Duncan built a new township near the old one at the cost of Rs. 1562-as. 9-ps. 3.¹⁴⁹ An area of 101 *bighas* of land was acquired from the local *zamindar* on payment of Rs. 50 and on converting his 5 *bighas* of land rent-free. The land was converted into a governmental property and plots were allotted to applicants for constructing their own buildings. The new houses were mostly occupied by the Deccani merchants and became the main receptacle of cotton imports.¹⁵⁰ The custom-house was shifted to the new town. Elaborate security measures were taken by posting a deputy *kotwal*, a *mohrir* and 28 watchmen and also by repairing the ramparts and cleansing the ditches.¹⁵¹

In spite of these measures, owing to the fraud practised by the collectors in the dominions of the *nawab-wazir*, the importation of cotton from the Deccan to the mart of Mirzapore diminished to a great extent and this caused considerable deficiency in the annual collections. The officials of the Nawab at Foolpore, in collusion with the merchants importing goods into the province of Benares, fixed their valuation at fifty per cent less than the real price and thus defrauded the duties payable there.¹⁵² So the Deccani cotton merchants, having Mirzapore as the venue of their trade, could not compete with those traders who sent this article of trade through the territory of the Nawab of Awadh. Duncan wrote to Ives, the British Resident at Lucknow, on March 8, 1791, to procure a positive instruction from Hyder Beg, the minister of the *nawab-wazir*, to the customs officers, posted at Foolpore and other places under the Nawab's Government, for inserting proper and full prices in the *rowannahs*.¹⁵³

In May 1791, Asafuddaula informed the President of the Board of Trade that he had got the *darogha* at Foolpore dismissed for his dishonesty, had appointed a new officer in his place and had issued instructions to customs officers ordering them to state correctly the value of the articles covered by the *rowannahs*.¹⁵⁴

The trade with Nepal was virtually suspended after the Gurkha rebellion of 1763, but a large number of Napalese pilgrims visited the sacred city of Benares every year and naturally became acquainted with Ali Ibrahim Khan, the judge and magistrate of the city. In early 1788, Ali Ibrahim Khan intimated to the Nepal Government through a pilgrim, named Parhams Gossain Parampuri, that it was the policy of the British Government to encourage merchants and pilgrims from Nepal to visit Benares in ever increasing numbers with the perfect ease of mind.¹⁵⁵ In March, 1788, Maharaja Ran Bahadur Sah acknowledged the kindness, shown by Ali Ibrahim Khan and the British Resident to the Napalese pilgrims, by sending a presentation of a piece of valuable cloth and musk-ball, and desired that regular communication might be made between them.¹⁵⁶

The agent of the Raja of Nepal applied to the Resident in December, 1789, for a *maafy rowannah* in respect of a small quantity of goods for the purchase of which he had been commissioned by his master. As the duty in question was a small amount of Rs. 659 and the British Government was ever eager to cultivate a good understanding with the Raja of Nepal, Duncan agreed to grant the indulgence.¹⁵⁷ On January 13, 1790, the Government highly appreciated the act of the Resident and resolved, "If upon any future occasion, it should appear to him advisable to grant a remission of duties on goods purchased in Benares for the use of Foreign Princes and Chiefs with a view to cultivate good understanding between them and this Government that he is authorised to grant remission."¹⁵⁸

In the meanwhile, the collector of Purnea indicated to the Government the possibilities of the Nepal trade. On November 11, 1790, Cornwallis informed the Raja of Nepal of the measures that he had adopted for the encouragement of commerce between Nepal and British India and authorised Duncan to carry on negotiations

for a commercial treaty between the two.¹⁵⁹ Cornwallis also communicated to the Raja of Nepal his desire to establish free trade with the latter's country.¹⁶⁰ Duncan also contacted Gajraj Misra, the *Guru* of the Raja of Nepal,¹⁶¹ who had some interests in Benares and who had been involved in a litigation there with Umodh Singh.¹⁶² The Resident began to collect details of the prevalent trade between Nepal and the Company's territories from the collectors of Purnea, Tirhut and Saran, and found that the chief exports from Nepal were cow-tails, timber, woodworks, rice and paddy, grains of all sorts, cardamons (large), musk, wax, elephant, ivory, *cocuin* (a specimen of woolen cloth), Bhutan blanket, rhinoceros' horn and teeth, *hare*, *sohaga*, *Pupil*, *chireta*, various kinds of drugs, etc., and the chief imports to Nepal were salt, betal-nuts, spices, cardamon (small), pepper, sugar, tobacco, cloths (cotton and woolen), oil, coral, cloves, nutmegs, tin, iron, carpets, large shells, red and white sandal woods, etc.¹⁶³

Duncan also found several obstacles to the proposed treaty with Nepal. In the district of Purnea, there were local objections to the importation of grain from Nepal. The local duties imposed on commodities both in the *zamindari* of Benares and in Calcutta were incompatible with any treaty of reciprocity to be concluded with Nepal. Moreover, it was beyond the capacity of the collectorate at Mangee to control all the trade between Nepal and British India.¹⁶⁴

On September 12, 1791, Duncan sent a draft of the treaty to be concluded with Nepal to the Government, and wrote that the *Guru* of the Raja proposed to visit Benares in near future and that the said treaty might be despatched to Kathmandu before the *Guru* had left that place.¹⁶⁵ He also advised the Government to set up a line of *chaukis* along the frontier to facilitate commerce with Nepal, and suggested that the superintendence of this foreign trade should be entrusted to the district revenue collectors who would perform this additional duty with more efficiency and less expense than any other officer having a separate establishment and who could also prevent the undue obstacles to or exactions on the trade.¹⁶⁶

Duncan also requested Gajraj Misra to remain at Kathmandu till the arrival of his *wakil* and intimated to him that, if he helped the Government in concluding the treaty, "his concern" in Benares

would be satisfactorily settled.¹⁶⁷ In October, 1791, Gajraj Misra asked Duncan to despatch the *wakil* without delay and promised to exert his utmost endeavours for obtaining all the English objectives from the Maharaja.¹⁶⁸

On December 2, 1791, the Government indicated the main principles of the proposed treaty. It did not agree to the Resident's proposal of establishing a line of *chaukis* along the northern frontiers of the Company's territories as that would "probably exceed the amount of collections".¹⁶⁹ It desired to have several stations of collections, such as Benares, Mangee and Calcutta, but the goods imported from Nepal would be charged only once a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent at any one of these stations.¹⁷⁰ It also did not accept the proposal of authorising the revenue collectors with the collection of duties as that would "interfere with internal arrangements" which had been "recently adopted in those districts".¹⁷¹ It also indicated to Duncan that the duties should be levied not on the price indicated in the *rowannah*, but on that mentioned in the mutually agreed table of rates. The Resident was directed to prepare a detailed book of rates which would leave little room for fraud or alteration and also to depute a person with necessary instructions to Kathmandu to conduct the negotiations for the proposed commercial treaty.¹⁷² The Government wrote to Duncan, "Our object in proposing the Treaty to the Rajah being to obtain an admission for the produce and manufactures of Bengal as well as many of the articles imported from Europe into the Countries situated beyond the mountains which form the northern boundary of the Company's dominions, we should as before intimated to you, readily consent to a mutual exemption from all duties, did we conceive that such an arrangement would be more likely to effect the object of the Treaty than that now proposed. But it appears to us, that by agreeing to a small fixed duty being levied in the Nepal territories on our exports that Government will find an immediate advantage in adhering to the articles of the Treaty and that the Chaukis and Guards which they will be under the necessity of establishing on the high roads leading through the mountains for the purpose of levying the duties will protect the Merchants from the exactions of the Landholders as well as secure them from depredations of Robbers".⁷³

Without waiting for the final orders from the Government, Duncan had to despatch Maulvi Abdul Qadir as his agent to complete the negotiations with the Raja of Nepal because the *Guru* had become impatient to go to Benares.¹⁷⁴ While instructing the Maulvi, Duncan had incorporated all recommendations of the Government except one. He vested the envoy with discretionary powers "to agree to the duties being levied either upon the Invoice prices or agreeably to a Book of Rates to be formed from the materials".¹⁷⁵ The personal salary of the envoy was fixed at Rs. 1000 per month and another one thousand was sanctioned for meeting up the expenses of his establishment. The Maulvi carried with him presentations for the Raja and his family, which, together with three months' allowances for the envoy, amounted to Rs. 8,475 and this sum was paid in advance to him.¹⁷⁶

Duncan counted much on the influence of the *Guru* and hoped to achieve something substantial through him. He wrote to the Government on February 4, 1792, "Considering the firmness with which the Rajah's Goroo Gujraje Misr appears to have supported our Influence at the Court of Nepaul and the great use he may hereafter prove of in maintaining as well as in carrying any future point for our Government, I submit the Expediency of my being allowed to bestow on him on his coming here, after the Conclusion of the Treaty, a small Jaguir not exceeding 1500 Rupees a year, a Gift that will invariably attach him to our Interests".¹⁷⁷

On January 14, 1792, the Maulvi arrived at the village of Ghohda, a few miles away from Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, and was warmly received by Gajraj Misra who looked upon himself as the Resident's man. The *Guru* arranged a meeting of the British envoy with Ran Bahadur, the Raja of Nepal, on the 16th January.¹⁷⁸ In the *darbar* of the Raja, there had been envoys from the Governments of Awadh, China and Gwalior (the Sindhia), but the reception accorded to the agent of the English Company was much more honourable than that of theirs and he was awarded a seat next to the Raja.¹⁷⁹

Profound influence of the *Guru* with the Raja and with the chiefs of the kingdom facilitated the task of the Maulvi,¹⁸⁰ and accordingly, a commercial treaty was signed on the 1st March, 1792.¹⁸¹ It provided

that a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent should be reciprocally levied on the imports from both the countries; such duties would be levied on the price mentioned in the invoice of goods; if the merchants should not have the original invoice with them, a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent would be levied on a valuation according to the market price. This duty would be levied only once at one of the specified stations and, after having once paid the duties and receiving a *rowannah* therefrom, no other or further duty should be payable throughout each country. If any of the officers on either side exceeded in his demands for or exactions of duty, he was to be severely punished by the Government concerned. In the case of thefts or robberies of the goods of the visiting merchants, the *faujdar* or the officer of the locality would be required to compensate for the losses. If the merchants of one state brought goods to the other, but did not sell them there and wished to export the same to another country, they could do the same without paying any additional duty.¹⁸²

The treaty became operative in both the countries on the 9th April, 1792.¹⁸³ In the company's territory, Mirzapore, Ghazipore, Jaunpore, Manjee as well as Calcutta, and in the country of Nepal, Kathmandu, Chasapani as well as Sedi were fixed as the stations for collecting the customs duties.¹⁸⁴ Both Abdul Qadir Khan and Gajraj Mistra were granted *jagirs* worth Rs. 1,575¹⁸⁵ and Rs. 2,573¹⁸⁶ per annum respectively for their services to the English Company.

Duncan was very confident of the success of this commercial treaty and observed on the 3rd April, 1792, "I have the strongest reliance on the permanency and Efficiency of the Engagement thus entered into, provided they be duly observed throughout the Dominions of the Hon'ble Company".¹⁸⁷ The Government was also hopeful that the treaty would "establish a Commercial intercourse between the two Countries for their benefit" and wrote to the Court of Directors on August 25, 1792, "We are in hopes that this arrangements will be adhered to by the Rajah and that in course of time it will be the means of opening an extensive mart for the productions of Bengal".¹⁸⁸

The English Government made some arrangements for encouraging the Nepalese merchants to trade with British India. On the basis of his experience during his journey to and from Kathmandu,

Abdul Qadir had reported to Duncan about the undue exactions of the local officials at the stations of Derowlee and Sugauli on the Nepal merchants under the pretext of searching and comparing the goods with the *rowannahs*. To promote the Nepal trade, the Resident pleaded for the abolition of the outpost at Sugauli.¹⁸⁹ On April 13, 1792, the Government accepted the contention of the Resident and orders were, accordingly, issued.¹⁹⁰

The Nepal Government experienced difficulties in implementing the treaty, because the country of Nepal was hilly and full of jungles and people were addicted to old customs regulations.¹⁹¹ Under this context, it could not provide for the security of the merchants visiting Nepal. But the most serious hindrance to its implementation was the Chinese invasion of Nepal. The Raja of Nepal sent repeated letters to the Resident at Benares for help during the months of August, and September, 1792.¹⁹² Duncan wrote to the Raja that the English had no enmity with China, so they could not send any military help to the Nepal Government.¹⁹³ This attitude of the British Government sounded the death-knell to the prospects of the commercial treaty with Nepal which could not be hereafter revived, despite, several diplomatic missions sent later on.

The fixation of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent duty on imports and exports of Nepal made the export duty of 5 per cent on the goods produced and manufactured in Benares anomalous.¹⁹⁴ On June 20, 1792, the Government at the Resident's recommendations reduced the export duty from 5 per cent to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on goods produced or manufactured in Benares.¹⁹⁵ On July 1, 1792, the Resident requested the Government to make the reductions effective from the 1st day of 1200 *fasli*.¹⁹⁶ On July 13, 1792, the suggestion of Duncan was accepted.¹⁹⁷ In September, 1792, the Government reduced the duty on goods passing into Bihar from Benares to $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in place of 5 per cent.¹⁹⁸

On September 19, 1794, the Government directed the Resident that "all the Rules regarding the Collection of the Customs in Benares must be formed into a separate Regulation in the same manner as the Regulations regarding the Customs in Bengal."¹⁹⁹ But Duncan did not think that any material improvement was required

in the existing customs regulations operating in Benares, which he considered "as the best arranged and conducted Department within the District."²⁰⁰

Still in December, 1794, Duncan had to suggest some changes in the customs regulations, because the post of the Resident was about to be abolished in the near future. He proposed to vest in the collector the authority of dismissing or fining Indian customs officers for any official irregularity and neglect of duty. He also indicated the necessity of empowering the collector to levy double duties, to confiscate goods, etc. and of giving the Senior Judge of the Provincial Court the authority of granting *maafy rowannah*.²⁰¹ Duncan also suggested that the collector, in the capacity of collector of customs, should be under the Board of Revenue.²⁰²

Shore accepted most of the suggestions offered by Duncan, but rendered the Collector, in his capacity of collector of customs, "immediately subordinate to the Board of Trade in the same manner as the Collector of Customs in the Provinces," and observed on July 13, 1795, "The expediency of placing the Customs thro'out Bengal dominions under the same controlling authority is obvious and the measure is further necessary to preserve uniformity in principle and system."²⁰³

By the end of 1795, nearly the Bengal type of customs regulations came to operate in Benares. In the process of lining up the customs of Benares with those of Bengal Presidency, several duties were abolished and all others were reduced to one half.²⁰⁴ Yet, owing to the development of trade, the receipts did not decrease. The average receipts of the customs of the province of Benares during Duncan's administration were between £ 40,000 and £ 50,000 per annum. The receipts of the Ghazipore custom-house and those of Mirzapore were nearly equal and amounted generally to about Rs. 1,70,000 each. The Jaunpore customs receipts stood at about Rs. 50,000 and those of Benares was Rs. 30,000.²⁰⁵

Grain and foodstuff :

In the days of Balwant Singh, the country of Benares was so well cultivated and prosperous that the people of adjoining districts fled to Benares to eke out a living. On March 14, 1770, James

Alexander wrote to the Select Committee, "This district (Shahabad) appears to be very little inhabited, but the want of ryots may be accounted for its vicinity to Bulwand Sing's country, where every possible encouragement is given to farmer."²⁰⁶

During the years 1769-70, when the famine ravaged Bengal and parts of Bihar, Benares was a surplus area and grain was cheaper there. Balwant Singh liberally co-operated with the English administration in Bengal in their attempt to ward off the natural calamity²⁰⁷ and his country proved a granary to the famine-stricken people of Bengal. Sitab Roy used to send his boats and rowers to Benares thrice a month for purchasing grain from there and set apart Rs. 30,000 for the purpose.²⁰⁸

As a ruler, Chait Singh was not so successful as his father ; yet in his administration we never hear of any famine or scarcity. After an extensive study of the available records, Oldham, as early as 1870, observed, "During the administration of Rajah Cheyte Sing, the province of Benares was everywhere well-cultivated and flourishing."²⁰⁹ Even in January, 1788, when there was scarcity and dearth of grain at Calcutta, Murshidabad, Dacca and in other parts of Bengal, there was plenty of grain and foodstuff in Benares and the Resident was instructed to give all-out assistance to the exportation of grain from there to Bengal and Bihar.²¹⁰ Accordingly, on February 20, 1788, customs duties on the grain exported to the district of Dacca was entirely suspended and only a nominal duty of one per cent was collected on all kinds of foodstuff exported to Murshidabad, Calcutta, or to other parts of Bengal.²¹¹

The general condition of cultivation had been rapidly declining during the six years after the flight of Chait Singh, and naturally, every failure in periodical rains resulted in dearth of grains and in famines. In late 1788, periodical rains failed in Benares and dire scarcity began to loom large over the province.²¹² Duncan took some precautionary steps. On October 19, 1788, with a view to discouraging the rise in the prices of the foodstuff, Duncan sent circulars to all custom-houses prohibiting the exportation of all kinds of grain from the *zamindari* of Benares.²¹³

But these orders did not improve the food situation. Duncan spent ten thousand rupees from his treasury for purchasing grain

from neighbouring countries, and sent the same, when procured, for sale in those parts of the province, where the situation had been particularly alarming.²¹⁴

On December 1, 1788, Duncan asked the Magistrates of Benares and Mirzapore to send daily statements of price current in their respective towns and also to fix the prices of the foodstuffs. Accordingly, they fixed the prices of the principal grains. But the prices being much higher in the market than those fixed by the officials, the grain went underground and the distress of the people could not be alleviated. Duncan had to raise the controlled price of the grains in order to maintain its steady supply in the market.²¹⁵ Moreover, on December 26, 1788, the Government virtually removed all duties on foodstuffs and grains imported to Benares from the Company's provinces.

In 1789, the crops were good and the food situation improved to some extent, but owing to some predictions by the Brahmins about scarcity, the traders began to hoard grains and prices went up.²¹⁶ The lot of the common people, again, became miserable.

In 1790, the situation improved considerably and there was virtually no scarcity, but still all grains imported from Bengal and Bihar passed under *maafy rowannah*. This caused heavy loss in the customs collections to the *zamindari* of Benares, and in fair price to the producers. Duncan wrote to Revell, collector of customs at Manjhi, to inform him on what goods and on what occasions such *maafy rowannahs* were granted.²¹⁷ Revell replied that, as the orders of the 26th December, 1788, for the suspension of duty on grain remained unrevoked, he granted *maafy rowannah* on foodstuff.²¹⁸

On February 1, 1790, Duncan complained to the Government against the import of duty-free grain into Benares and observed, "it becomes a real and material loss to this Zamindary in more respects than one to admit of its Importation in the present session of plenty without Duties."²¹⁹ He proposed to introduce a levy on grain imported to Benares with effect from the 15th February, 1790

But the Government could not agree to the proposal of levying a duty at the custom-houses in Benares on grain exported from the Company's provinces under a *maafy rowannah*, because it did not

treat Benares as having a separate identity and looked upon the interest of the British possessions in India as a whole.²²⁰

In a province like Benares, where every drought was accompanied by scarcity of foodstuffs, the best means of fighting famine was to improve the cultivation and to build up a buffer stock for the evil days. So, in 1791, the Resident issued circulars to the *amils* for forcing the dealers to furnish the usual supply of seeds to the ryots on easy terms and to make large advances of *takavi* for the purchase of seed and for the digging of wells. In 1791, Rs. 33,990 were advanced to the ryots for this purpose.²²¹

In October, 1794, the Government, as a security against scarcity, decided to construct granaries and to store grains in good season for selling them to the public in times of need. Accordingly, the Resident got granaries constructed at Chunar and Benares at the cost of Rs. 13,000²²² approximately and kept 1,65,000 maunds of grain as a buffer stock.

Opium :

In the first half of the 18th century, opium was cultivated in Ghazipore, but it was not very popular and did not exceed 100 maunds. Its quality, too, was never such as to become an object for exportation eastward. It was purchased at low prices by the western merchants who carried the same along the routes of Mirzapore and Chitterpore into Marwar where it was consumed by the Rajputs. Sometimes, the Patna merchants used it for piling with their own purchases.²²³

In 1773, Hastings deprived the Patna Council of the privilege of private trade in opium and decided to farm it out, on behalf of the Government.²²⁴ Accordingly, he appointed two contractors for procuring the entire opium produce of the province of Bihar.²²⁵ It is but natural that his attention would be drawn to the *zamindari* of Benares, where this article of commerce was being extensively cultivated in the *sarkar* of Ghazipore, and where the English Company had been enjoying some trade facilities.

In December, 1773, Muhammad Munir and Ramchand Pandit, the sole opium contractors for Bihar, were appointed the English agents for purchasing opium for the Company from Benares. The

Raja was requested to help them in their business and not to allow any other person to purchase opium in his *zamindari*. The Raja was also told that these agents would pay the usual prices and duty on the said article.²²⁶ In February, 1774, Chait Singh agreed to grant a monopoly of opium to the agents of the English Company.²²⁷ The general valuation of the Ghazipore opium, according to the book of Rates, was Rs. 75 per maund ; so Rs. 3-as. 12-, that is, 5 per cent duty, was collected by the Raja on opium purchases made by the agents of the Company.

After the replacement of Chait Singh in 1781, the Government imposed on opium an additional duty of Rs. 40 per maund and the total amount of duty paid for Ghazipore opium became Rs. 43-as. 12- per maund.²²⁸

On June 12, 1784, the Government passed orders for doubling the duty on opium produce of Ghazipore. Thus, the duty paid per maund of opium became Rs. 87-as. 8. According to the new book of Rates, the prime cost and duties paid, together, amounted to Rs. 399-as 9-ps. 6 per chest of opium, but its market value was Rs. 400 approximately. So, after the imposition of double duty, opium trade of Benares came to a standstill. As Hastings observed on January 7, 1785, "If these facts are justly stated, the last order for exacting an additional duty is in fact equal to a Prohibition on the Importation of Opium from Ghazipore".²²⁹

On March 10, 1785, the Government rescinded the orders of June, 1784, and asked Fowke to see that the double duties, collected so far, were refunded.²³⁰

It was during Grant's residency that opium was extensively cultivated in the *sarkar* of Benares as well as in Ghazipore and several other places.²³¹ In the *fasli* year 1194, 580 chests of opium were manufactured in the *zamindari* and on the 15th November, 1787, the Resident took the delivery of the same.²³²

On October 16, 1787, the Government asked Duncan to procure the opium produce of the *zamindari* as usual, but left to the Resident the option of adopting necessary measures for the purpose. Accordingly, the Resident issued a public notification on the 27th October, indicating the Government monopoly of opium and inviting tenders from those persons ready to supply opium to the Government. The

persons desiring to supply this article of trade to the Government were required to state the quality, quantity and the terms.²³³

The tenders were opened on the 20th November, 1787. Duncan was satisfied with the offer of Ram Chand Pandit who had stated that opium could be procured at the rate of Rs. 150 per chest exclusive of his personal remuneration. But Duncan found that his principle of procuring opium, without any injury to the cultivator and without smallest adulteration, could not be achieved by a contract with any person. So, he proposed to Ram Chand Pandit that, instead of acting as the contractor, the latter should supply opium to the Resident in the capacity of his agent.²³⁴ To guard against adulteration and to ensure the purity of manufacture, Duncan suggested to the Government that the warehouse should be shifted to Benares from Ghazipore which was far off from the seat²³⁵ of power of the Resident.

On December 7, 1787, the Government approved of the mode of procurement adopted by the Resident for the provision of opium, appointment of Ram Chand Pandit as the agent for the same and also his proposal of shifting the warehouse to Benares.²³⁶

On April 9, 1788, the Government wanted to know from the Resident the state of opium cultivation in Benares for ascertaining whether the agency system, or the contract system, or the proposal of leaving the disposal of opium in the hands of the ryots with the enhanced revenue for those lands, would be best suited to the interests of the Company. The questionnaire was framed and the Resident was asked to send in his reply by the 1st August, 1788.²³⁷

Duncan, taking these questions on the subject of opium into his consideration, referred them to Ram Chand Pandit who had a very long experience of this article in the province of Bihar as well as in Benares. Ram Chand Pandit opined that, in the contract system, the ryots had to suffer from the rapacity of the contractor who exploited them for his selfish ends.²³⁸ If the ryots were left to dispose of the opium cultivated by them, they would not agree to pay the enhanced rent for the lands cultivated by them, and if the trade was left open, about 200 to 300 chests of opium would probably pass westward and northward from Benares and the quality of opium might deteriorate and the ryots might fall a victim to the

exactions of the collector of revenue. Only agency system could preserve equally the interests of the Government as well as of the ryots, and would induce them to cultivate more and more poppy.²³⁹

The answers and observations of Ram Chand Pandit appeared so convincing to the Resident that he preferred agency system to other methods.²⁴⁰ He wrote to the Government that so long as the provision of opium was to be in the hands of the Company, it could hardly be better conducted than under the regulations suggested by Ram Chand Pandit and that he had every reason to think that the Government would be pleased with its quality and that he expected to procure 1000 maunds of opium for the current year, to extend the same to 1,400 maunds at least in 1196 *fasli*, and probably to 2000 maunds in 1197 *fasli*.²⁴¹ Duncan also proposed to advance immediately to the ryots Rs. 15,000 for the ensuing year which would assist them in increasing the quantity for 1196.²⁴²

But the confidence of Duncan was rudely shaken in no time. On October 19, 1788, he reported to the Government that want of rain would prove prejudicial to the ensuing opium crop, as the ryots were averse from cultivating poppy in such a dry season. He adopted a middle course. He did not compel any of the ryots to take to the opium cultivation, but he did not permit them to alter the contract which they had already entered into i.e., he forced those who had already accepted advances for the cultivation of opium to produce the same.²⁴³

In spite of his best efforts, on November 2, 1788, Duncan could despatch only 300 chests of opium at the rate of Rs. 150 per chest and expected to despatch 180 or 190 or, at the utmost, 200 chests by the end of the month and stated that this opium was really genuine.²⁴⁴ But the Resident had to revise the rate on January 2, 1789, and make it Rs. 180 or 190 per chest of opium for giving relief to the opium producers and also for meeting the extra expenses.²⁴⁵ Moreover, the Government had to pay Rs. 15 per chest to the agent as his remuneration.²⁴⁶ Thus the Government had to incur an expense of Rs. 195 or Rs. 205 per chest of opium besides the cost of transportation.

It is but natural that the Government would not like to continue the agency system, in which the supply was uncertain and it had to

incur heavier expenses. Thus, partly owing to the failure of the agency system and partly to the introduction of uniformity with the opium trade in Bihar, the Government on September 14, 1789, appointed John Williams the opium contractor of Benares for four years. The quantity of opium to be produced at Benares was fixed at 500 chests. To give incentive to the contractor for procuring more than the stipulated quantity, it was decided that he would get *sicca* Rs. 50 for each additional chest.²⁴⁷

The contractor was permitted to buy opium from the territory of the Nawab of Awadh by paying a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on such purchases, but he was forbidden to buy the same from the Company's provinces.²⁴⁸ The Resident was directed to insert a stipulation in Williams's engagement that one half of the quantity, agreed to by his contract, should be delivered at the Presidency by the 1st December, and the remainder by the 6th January, in each year beginning with the year 1790-91.²⁴⁹

On November 9, 1789, the Resident notified the Raja, the judges of the *adalats* and the *amils* of the Benares province of the appointment of the opium contractor, and asked them to acquaint the cultivators with the conditions of the contract.²⁵⁰

On November 23, 1789, the Resident reported to the Government that opium procured under agency system for the past year had been ascertained to amount to 518 chests and that it was of good quality. He also indicated that this amount had been procured without putting any pressure on the ryots.²⁵¹ He requested the Government to pay off the agent his commission which was accordingly done on the 9th December, 1789.²⁵²

The contractor immediately urged the Government to make necessary arrangements for preserving his exclusive privileges. The Council accordingly notified on the 19th February, 1790, that any European, engaged in opium trade contrary to the Regulations of the Government, would forfeit the protection of the Company and would be sent back to Europe and that any Indian guilty of the same offence would be fined 375 *sicca* rupees for every maund of opium illegally possessed.²⁵³

The contract system of procuring opium, being entirely new to the people and to the judges of the *adalats*, some tricky problems

cropped up. The judge of the *moolky adalat* enquired of the Resident how he would deal with the cases, in which the ryot had delivered the amount of opium fixed by the *kurkoot* and had sold privately some extra opium produced or purchased by him.²⁵⁴ The Resident directed the judge to impose a fine of 160 *sicca* rupees per maund, if the produce was of the current year, and if the extra opium was of past year, the cultivator was to be fined Rs. 325 for every maund. The ryot was to be fined in the same manner, even if the produce was his purchase by way of trade.²⁵⁵

Maulvi Amirullah, the judge and magistrate of the *adalat* of Ghazipore, sought the Resident's opinion on cases where any person, not an inhabitant of the province of Benares, brought opium there for sale or where the peon of the opium department purchased some extra opium from a ryot by paying something more and brought this to the notice of the *adalat*.²⁵⁶ The Resident laid down that in the first case, the person should be forced to sell the opium to the contractor at the prescribed rate and in the second, the ryot should be penalised according to the law of the land.²⁵⁷

The contractor also faced considerable difficulties in procuring opium under the present system. The ryots, never being under his control, evaded the regulations of the Government relative to the cultivation of opium. Many cultivators, who undertook to cultivate poppy on a certain piece of land, produced the same on the half of it ; sometimes they utilised the advances received for opium cultivation on tobacco, or other profitable cultivation, and when applied to the *adalat*, they paid up the loan with 12 per cent interest.²⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, the cultivators always neglected to cultivate the whole of the contracted ground and did not even sell the entire produce. Sometimes they deposited the surplus opium in the territory of the *nawab-wazir* and thus befooled the contractor. Complaining of all these obstacles in the way of the operation of the contract system, Williams prayed to the Governor-General on June 13, 1791, "to direct remedies for the security of Opium cultivation of this Zamindaree".²⁵⁹

On July 1, 1791, the Government referred this representation of Williams to the Resident and directed him to furnish his own opinion on the subject.²⁶⁰

The Resident had some discussions with the contractor and the judges of the several courts and became convinced that the Proclamation of March 4, 1791, which had been intended for Bihar, should be extended to Benares.²⁶¹ This Proclamation prevented all clandestine dealings in opium by awarding same penalties on the purchaser of the illicit article as on its seller and made the ryots, embezzling or disposing of opium, liable to a fine of 4 *sicca* rupees per seer in addition to the confiscation of opium, and in cases where opium could not be confiscated, they were to pay a fine of 10 *sicca* rupees per seer.²⁶² Accepting the advice of the Resident, on June 29, 1792, the Government extended the Proclamation operating in Bihar to Benares.²⁶³

On April 26, 1793, the Government notified that the present contract for the provision of opium in the province of Benares would expire on the 31st August, 1793, and a fresh contract for four years would operate from the 1st September, 1793.²⁶⁴ The contractor was to deliver 600 chests of opium of two maunds each. The contractor would receive 50 *sicca* rupees, in addition to the contract price, for each chest above 600 chests. The quality supplied must be according to the specimen delivered to the office of the Board of Trade. The contractor was to undertake to pay a penalty of 300 *sicca* rupees for every chest of opium short of the stipulated quantity. If the shortage was caused by natural calamity, he was not to pay the penalty but only to return the advances with an interest of 8 per cent. The contractor was liable to pay a penalty of 750 *sicca* rupees per chest for selling the article to any other person than the Company. He was to pay a duty of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on any opium imported from Awadh. The contractor was to pay Rs. 2-as. 8, to the ryots for each seer of pure opium. He was allowed to take from the ryot a surplus of one *chhatak* for every two and a half seers of opium for the drying up and wastage of crude material. He was empowered to take a written undertaking from the ryots for the specific number of *bighas* to be cultivated. The Resident was to depute an agent to ascertain the probable produce and the contractor was then to make contract for the same. In the event of crop failure owing to natural calamity, the ryot could refund the advance with 8 per cent interest on the sum received so far. If the failure was for his negligence, the

ryot was to pay the interest at the rate of 12 per cent. In cases of embezzlement, he was to be punished according to the law of the land.²⁶⁵

Thus the Government safeguarded the interests of the contractor and made all possible arrangements for getting the entire opium produce of the province. But no provision was made for protecting the interests of the opium cultivator.

On June 28, 1793, the Government accepted the tender of Gilchrist and Charters for the opium contract of the province.²⁶⁶

Despite the elaborate regulations and ample powers, the opium contractors had to face some problems, posed by the indigo planters. One such serious dispute broke out between the *zamindars*, who had settled the land with the indigo planters, and the opium cultivators (*koerees*) of the *taluka* of Amghat in the district of Ghazipore. The *zamindars* held, as the opium cultivators did not pay the land-revenue, the *pargana* was settled with Scot and Johnson, the indigo planters. The situation took an ugly turn in September, 1793, when the opium contractors began to support the cultivators, who, though they did not possess any valid *pottah*, had been cultivating the fields and paying the revenue since 1196 *fasli*.²⁶⁷ On October 4, 1793, the Government ordered Treves, the acting Resident, to restore the opium cultivators to the lands for the purpose of cultivating poppies and to keep Scot, the indigo planter, in readiness to quit Benares.²⁶⁸

On September 19, 1794, the Government asked the Resident to frame the terms of the opium contract into a Regulation (in the same manner), as those in Bengal and Bihar had been framed.²⁶⁹ Accordingly, the Resident drew up the Regulations XXXII for the opium contract.²⁷⁰

Thus, as in Bihar and Bengal, the opium cultivation in Benares was free in theory, but the growers of the opium poppy had to sell the same only to the contractors who could exploit them by every possible means. The Government was satisfied with the stipulated amount of opium and also with the expectation to get more, and naturally, had to shut its eyes to the activities of the opium contractors, leaving the cultivators to their mercies.

Indigo :

In the province of Benares, indigo was not manufactured by the local people, but in some *parganas*²⁷¹ a few *rangrezes* (dyers) cultivated it for their own personal use, and the surplus manufactured by them was sold to the merchants at the rate of Rs. 2-as. 4, to Rs. 3 per seer.²⁷² In 1193 *fasli*, Grant started the manufacture of indigo in the *sarkar* of Ghazipore.²⁷³ In 1786, the Directors of the East India Company asked the Governor-General to explore "the possibility of making it a most valuable article of importation". But by that year, the Bengal Government's policy of directly trading in indigo had virtually failed and it was looking forward to develop this important article of commerce through individual efforts. In pursuance of this policy, the Government in 1787, permitted Dr. Gilchrist and Charters to start the cultivation and manufacture of indigo in the province of Benares. Other Europeans soon followed in the footsteps of Gilchrist.

While encouraging the individuals to develop indigo cultivation, the Government in June, 1787, restricted the district collectors from granting any land in farm to the Europeans and this circular was also applicable to the Europeans who had procured *pottahs* from farmers in the *mofussil*. Duncan informed the Government on July 24, 1788, that Gilchrist had rented some lands in the *pargana* of Ghazipore from the Raja's *amil*, but there were no evil consequences from such renting on his part.²⁷⁴ The Government, desirous of encouraging indigo cultivation and at the same time of protecting the people from the rapacity of the European settlers, opined on August 6, 1788, that the European planters could hold such lands as they would receive under ryotwari *pottahs* from *zamindars* or renters at the established rent and that the ground, in the *pargana* of Ghazipore rented by Gilchrist for the purpose of carrying on manufacture of indigo, was not repugnant to the clause 54 of the Regulations for the Collectors of the districts.²⁷⁵

While sending this reply, the Government was not aware of the rent of the ground which Gilchrist had possessed himself of and of the tenure, under which it had been held. Gilchrist, taking full advantage of the reticence of the Government, began to procure lands by questionable means. Kasim Beg, the *amil* of Ghazipore,

lodged a complaint against Gilchrist and Charters that they had forced him to give a *taluka* for the indigo cultivation. The European planters, on the other hand, complained to the Resident that the *amil* of Ghazipore had charged exorbitant rents for the said *taluka*.²⁷⁶ On the 24th September, 1789, Duncan recorded his opinion that neither the figures given by the *amil* nor those supplied by the planter were just. The *amil* had claimed Rs. 4,552, whereas the planter had rated the land at Rs. 2,226, but Duncan found that the proper rent should be Rs. 3,187 on the basis of Rs. 3-as.-12 per *bigha*.²⁷⁷ Gilchrist objected to the verdict of the Resident and pleaded for reconsideration.²⁷⁸

The matter being referred to the Government, it directed the Resident to dispossess Gilchrist and Charter of the farm forcibly held by them from the *amil*, and wrote to Duncan that they had no objection to their continuing their manufacture or to their making advances to such ryots as might be willing to cultivate indigo for them or to their holding land upon *pottahs* from *zamindars* or farmers in the same manner as other ryots for the purpose of cultivating the plant themselves.²⁷⁹ The policy of the Bengal Government was to encourage indigo cultivation, but not settlements by the indigo planters. So it expressly prohibited renting of villages by the planters.

As the deprivation of the *taluka* might discredit the European planters in the eyes of the people of the province, Duncan asked both Gilchrist and Charters on February 24, 1790, to relinquish the farm voluntarily and it was accordingly done.²⁸⁰ To vindicate the honour of the European planters, he also dismissed Kasim Beg, the *amil*, from his service for bringing allegations against Gilchrist and Charters.

The orders of the Government, permitting the European to stay as ryots and encouraging indigo cultivation, made disputes very common. Pugh, a European indigo planter, settled on the borders of Lukhneshwar *pargana*, had bloody and violent disputes with the Sunghur *zamindars*.²⁸¹ Several *amils* and *zamindars* or farmers of villages were induced to let out fertile tracts of land to the English gentlemen in some villages. In some instances, they conceded the rights to the English planters to farm the revenue concerns and

thus to grasp the management of the entire village.²⁸² These planters also caused misery and hardship to the cultivators. Many thriving areas and productive lands were turned into indigo plantations by obliging the cultivators of the soil to remove their abodes and seek fresh fields for cultivation and residence. The planters' men often seized the commodities that passed through their villages and appropriated the grains and fodder on any price.²⁸³ Trees of the *zamindars* were often cut down without paying a fair price for the timber.²⁸⁴

The Government, hearing of these grievances and disputes, passed on March 7, 1794, a regulation that neither any European should be permitted to acquire any landed property in Benares exceeding what might be sufficient for the erection of houses or buildings for carrying on indigo manufactures, nor should he be competent to hold a greater extent of land upon lease than might be sufficient for the said purpose.²⁸⁵

These orders vitally affected the interests of the European indigo planters who represented to the Resident the difference between the system of cultivation of indigo in Bengal and Benares. In Bengal the plant became mature in one season, whereas in Benares in the third. So the planters looked for their returns in the second or third year. It was, therefore, necessary for them to keep possession of the land for the security of the plant.²⁸⁶ Moreover, they claimed that the condition of the poorer classes had improved by their manufactures, because a vast number of women and children found employment with them.²⁸⁷

Duncan did not pay any serious notice to the representation of the planters which was subsequently rejected by the Government. To make the orders of March, 1794, effective, he forbade any grant of land to the indigo planters by the *amil*, *zamindar* or farmer without his prior sanction. But he was a staunch supporter of the continuance of the indigo manufactories in Benares and wrote to the Council on May 10, 1794, that "The evils that had sprung from the growth and manufacture of Indigo might perhaps be ascribed to the abuse than to the fair use of the permission to cultivate and might therefore admit of amendment without tearing up the institution by the roots."²⁸⁸ He also forwarded to the Government a

representation of Mehndi Ali Khan, the *amil* of Chowsa, Dhoosa and Saidabad, offering himself as the contractor for supplying indigo to the planters.²⁸⁹

On May 23, 1794, the Government passed a series of regulations regarding cultivation of indigo and directed the Resident to afford every encouragement to the indigo planters to contract with the ryots for indigo by the *bigha* or bundle and also to inform Mehndi Ali Khan that he could not be permitted to avail himself of his official position as *amil* to compel the ryot or any individual to cultivate the opium poppies against his inclination.²⁹⁰ The Government resolved that all the leases of land, held by the European indigo planters existing prior to their orders of March, 1794, might remain in force until the expiry of the decennial system, but they must terminate after that period. All leases obtained directly or indirectly after the notification of March, 1794, were declared null and void. If any new lease was obtained, the lessee would not only be dispossessed of his acquisitions but would be sent back to Calcutta. An exception was made with regard to the field which was less than 50 *bighas* in extent and intended for the construction of indigo works.²⁹¹

The Government had no intention of putting any obstacle to the indigo cultivation and manufacture in Benares. It was specifically written to the Court of Directors on December 29, 1794, "It is not our intention to prohibit Individuals from making advances to the Ryots or manufacturers who might voluntarily receive them for the provision of Indigo."²⁹² The stand of the Government, as contained in the resolutions of March, 1794, was to prevent the evils and fatal consequences resulting from allowing the Europeans to possess themselves of extensive tracts of land. In doing this, the Government followed the same line of policy as had long been adopted in this respect in Bengal and Bihar.²⁹³ The Government was determined on allowing the indigo planters to reap the full benefit of the plots which they might have actually sown with indigo and on affording them enough time to make necessary arrangement with the ryots or with other individuals for furnishing them with the weed in the same manner as was done in case of the planters in Bengal.²⁹⁴ The Government desired that the ryots would be induced "to

undertake cultivation of the plant and deliver the weed to the manufacturer in the manner" as was practised in Bengal.²⁹⁵

Even this policy of the Government was not stringently carried out by Duncan who modified them to the advantage of the planters by permitting them to enter into contracts with the settled ryots or with such *pattidars* whose portions of tenure had been divided off without the permission of the *pottah* holders.²⁹⁶ Even after the decennial settlement was declared perpetual, the time (permission to continue up to full ten years) specified in the Governmental policy did not arrive and consequently, the Europeans did not cease to hold lands in the province of Benares.²⁹⁷

By June, 1795, the indigo Regulations of the Company's provinces became operative in Benares with a few minor and nominal modifications.²⁹⁸

Saltpetre :

The kingdom of Awadh was very rich in saltperre. Not so rich as Awadh in saltpetre, it could be found in the interior parts of the *zamindari* of Benares. Awadh produced roughly 50 thousand maunds per year and its lowest average price was Rs. 2-as. 8 per maund.²⁹⁹ The available saltpetre in the *zamindari* of Benares in 1775, was estimated at 25 thousand maunds approximately.³⁰⁰ According to Barlow's report of 1787, the quantity of saltpetre manufactured in the *zamindari* of Benares never exceeded 20 thousand maunds and its prime cost was about Re. 1-as. 12 per maund.³⁰¹ The saltpetre exported from Benares was manufactured at Barah near Chownsa, at Kylee, a town situated on the banks of the Ganga about 5 *kos* from Benares, and at Rowtee, a place, positioned on the banks of the Dewah³⁰² in the *sarkar* of Ghazipore.

Saltpetre, being an ingredient of gunpower, was very lucrative to the British commercial interest. In September, 1775, the English Company asked Chait Singh to supply 23 thousand maunds of saltpetre at the rate of Rs. 4.³⁰³ The Raja declined the offer and proposed to supply only 4 thousand maunds of saltpetre at the rate of Rs. 4 per maund, because the total output of it in his *zamindari* did not exceed 4 thousand maunds.³⁰⁴ The Board of Trade did not consider the proposal of the Raja for supplying 4 thousand maunds

of saltpetre deliverable at Patna at the rate of Rs. 4 per maund, advantageous to the Company, because the quantity was too small to be an object of consideration and was far below the annual produce of his territory as had been estimated by the Company's merchants.³⁰⁵ The Board of Trade wrote to the Governor-General on December 14, 1775, "We apprehend that you might be urging the matter to Cheyte Sing prevail (sic) to furnish a larger quantity and upon more reasonable terms. But if your assertion prove ineffectual, we shall, then from necessity be obliged to accept the offer made by you".³⁰⁶ The Board of Trade, thus, believed that much more than the offered quantity of saltpetre was available in the territory of Chait Singh. The Government did not consider it worth-while to procure 4 thousand maunds of saltpetre from the territory of Chait Singh, but asked the Raja, if he had already stored up a quantity in consequence of the previous application made to him, he might send the same to the commercial chief at Patna on his terms.³⁰⁷

After the replacement of Chait Singh in 1781, the trade in saltpetre was monopolised by the Residents and its profits were appropriated by them.³⁰⁸ Grant gave a monopoly of the same to Munnoo Lal³⁰⁹ for some money which he used to put in his own pocket. In November, 1787, Duncan, on behalf of the English Company, contracted with the same person for the delivery to him whatever quantity of saltpetre might be procured without any exertion at the rate of Re. 1-as. 10 per maund.³¹⁰ This contract became operative with effect from November 7, 1787.³¹¹ Duncan expected that 9 thousand or at least 8 thousand 5 hundred maunds of saltpetre, would be procured through Munnoo Lal.³¹² The Government directed Duncan on November 20, 1787, to deliver the saltpetre, contracted by Munnoo Lal, to the commercial agent at Patna.³¹³

But Munnoo Lal failed to provide the stipulated quantity of saltpetre. In spite of his best efforts, he could procure only 6 thousand 5 hundred maunds of saltpetre and returned the surplus advances together with the interest on the amount that he had taken for purchasing it. Duncan did not impose any penalty on the contractor.³¹⁴

Failure of the contractor to provide the stipulated amount of

saltpetre goaded the Resident to inquire into the state of it in the *zamindari* of Benares. As the provision of saltpetre had long been carried on the principles of monopoly, Duncan had reasons to believe that the prices allowed to the providers and the weight demanded from them were highly oppressive.³¹⁵ After making all possible inquiries, Duncan came to the conclusion that the providers of saltpetre should not be paid less than Re. 1-as. 10 per maund and the prime cost of saltpetre for the English Company could not be less than Rs. 2-as. 2 per maund exclusive of all duties.³¹⁶ Duncan reported to the Government on December 2, 1788, that he doubted whether the Company could afford to take saltpetre at that price. Again, the small quantity of saltpetre found in Benares could not be a "sufficient Inducement to the Government to exact it at a lower Rate to the native Provider".³¹⁷ The Resident indicated that the saltpetre in Benares was a losing article of trade for the Company.

On December 17, 1788, the Revenue council referred the matter to the Board of Trade for giving, their opinion, whether it would be advantageous to the Government to purchase saltpetre at the price proposed by the Resident at Benares.³¹⁸

Edward Hay, the Secretary to the Revenue Council, informed the Resident in February, 1789, the Government had decided to discontinue the monopoly of saltpetre in the *zamindari* of Benares from the present year. On March 4, 1789, the Resident took necessary steps and the trade in saltpetre was given up.³¹⁹

Currency :

Mint was first established in Benares in 1734 by the orders of Emperor Muhammad Shah. The assay of Benares *sicca* was fixed at 22 *chowels*, but at times, during that reign, it was debased to 32 *chowels*. During the reign of Ahmad Shah, the assay varied from 24 to 32 *chowels*. In the reign of Alamgir II, the assay considerably increased and in his last year, it was debased to 100 *chowels*. In the reign of Shah Alam II, Shujauddaula made some attempts to restore the rupee to its proper value, but with little success. In 1766, Shujauddaula, at the recommendation of Clive, tried to reform the Benares currency. A Delhi rupee of the 18th year of Emperor Shah Alam II was sent to Benares as a sample for new coinage.

This *sicca* was 22 *chowels* fine but, being worn out, it had lost 2 *chowels* in weight. The new rupee was in consequence, 2 *chowels* deficient and from this period Benares *sicca* became M 9, R 9, Ch 6, being 2 *chowels* less than the original established weight.³²⁰

In August, 1787, Barlow estimated that the annual amount of coinage was never less than 20 lacs nor more than 30 lacs except the 3rd, 4th and 5th year of the reign of Emperor Shah Alam II, when it amounted to nearly 50 lacs per annum.³²¹

In 1776, the Mint was transferred by the English Company to Chait Singh. The Raja engaged to coin *siccas* of M 9, R 9, Ch 6, weight and 18 *chowels* fine and also to continue the die of the 17th Sun. The purpose of English Company was to check the currency confusion, occasioned by the annual alteration of the value of rupees. It was also ordered that all rupees, coined in the Benares Mint, must be of the same weight and standard and must pass "as current rupees of the present year".³²² In 1781, the British Resident, on behalf of the Company, took up the charge of the Mint.³²³

Apart from the standard Benares *sicca*, several kinds of rupees of varying value were current in Benares and were used, for the purposes of account, in the province.³²⁴ The fluctuations of the current value of *sanawat* and *sicca* rupees gave the bankers great influence over the circulation of the currency. The rate of exchange was regulated not only by the quantity of silver in the coin but also by other adventitious circumstances which the bankers, through the medium of their agents residing in different parts of the country, were able to convert to their own advantage.³²⁵

In almost every *pargana* of a *sarkar* in the province of Benares, one particular type of rupees was current, in which the *zamindar* and husbandmen paid their rents to the farmers, appointed by the Government. In Ghazipore, the revenues were collected from the ryots in the old debased rupees of the reign of Alamgir II ; in some parts of Benares, bordering Bihar, 10th Sun rupees were current and in others 5, 7, 11 and 12 Sun rupees were in circulation. These rupees, though *sanawat* of very old date, were in constant demand for circulation in these areas, and were sold there in higher price than their intrinsic value. In fact, the value was put by the bankers

who, by means of their agents, bought up these *sanawat* rupees and sent them to the areas where they were current. The ryots were obliged to pay their rents in particular specie of rupees current in his *pargana*, and as a result of this system, the banker was able to rate it at what value he pleased. If the farmer had engaged to pay his revenue to the Government in *siccas*, the banker charged him the actual difference between the *sanawat* and *sicca*; if in *sanawats*, the banker took the same *batta* from the collector for the bills as on Calcutta *siccas*. In both cases, the rupees were sent back again to the *pargana* from where they had come, and where the bankers' agents again disposed of them at an enhanced price to the people.³²⁶

In an economy where one specimen of rupee was collected from the ryots and another used by the Government, the *amil's* banker, who had the sole monopoly of the right of exchanging them, would always contrive to take a considerable advantage for himself. The *amil* was generally in debt to the banker for his *kists* to be paid to the Government and the ryot for the money to be given to the *amil*; the whole circulation of currency was in the grip of the banker who could easily have two prices for the same coin, one, for the sale of *sanawat* coins, and the other, for the purchase of the same. Under this context, it could not be expected that the bankers would carry the *sanawat* coins to the Mint, where the quantity of alloy and the duties of recoinage would put them to a heavy loss.³²⁷

The Government, too, had to suffer by the currency of a variety of rupees. The principal source of losses accrued from the remittance of the revenue to the Presidency. The difference of intrinsic value between Benares and Calcutta rupee was about 3 or 4 per cent. But the rate of exchange between Benares and Calcutta *siccas* often rose to 9 to 10 per cent and sometimes even to 12 per cent as in the year 1784. The high rate of exchange was owing to the difference of weight and fineness of the Calcutta and Benares rupee, to the necessity of sending bullion to answer the bills and to the charges of recoinage. In the Calcutta Mint, 100 Benares *machhlidar* rupees could procure only 91 Calcutta *siccas*. When the exchange, therefore, was 109 Benares rupees for 100

Calcutta *siccas*, the banker got nothing for the trouble and risk of transporting the specie ; so, when any considerable sum was to be remitted to Calcutta, the exchange would seldom be lower than 9 per cent as the banker could not send specie and pay the charges of recoinage for less. The Benares administration had to sustain a loss on the amount remitted, because the money must pass through the Mint before it could be paid to the Treasury at the Presidency. Chait Singh demanded a reduction, when the shroffs doubled the rate of premium in 1777, for despatching his *kists* to Calcutta, but he was made to bear the loss. But after the instalation of Mahipnarain, the Company undertook the responsibility of sending the *kists* and the loss had to be borne by them.³²⁸

On May 9, 1787, the Government appointed Barlow to investigate the coinage of the province of Benares.³²⁹ Barlow submitted his report on August 24, 1787. He found that the great influence, which the bankers had acquired over the circulation of the currency in the *zamindari*, was founded on the fluctuation of the current value of the *sanawat* and *sicca* rupees, and also on the variety of coins used.³³⁰ He pointed out that four important factors were responsible for confusion in the currency ; (a) farming of the Mint, (b) the annual alteration in the value of different variety of rupees, (c) the proportion of value between three metals not being fixed and enforced by the Government, and (d) receiving rents from the farmers of revenue in other specie than the established currency. He recommended that the rupees coined throughout Bengal, Bihar and the *zamindari* of Benares should be of the same weight, standard, size and impression, that the engagements of the *amils* and farmers of revenue should be in future made in the established *sicca* rupees, that rents paid by the ryots to the *amils* and renters should be made in the established *sicca* rupees, that all purchases, sales and mercantile transactions whatever, all advances for the investment, all bonds and engagements for the payment of money should be made in the established *sicca* coin and that, if the old rupees were brought to the Mint and found upon melting down to be of the proper standard, an equal weight of the new coin should be given to the proprietor of the old coin without any fee, charge or expense whatever.³³¹

The recommendations of Barlow were kept aside for two years. It was only in July, 1789, Duncan tried to ascertain from Amba Sankar, the Mint master, Kawndas, the assay-master, Ali Ibrahim Khan, the judge and magistrate at Benares, and from the principal shroffs of the province the desirability of the introduction of the Bengal type of coinage in Benares.³³² Amba Sankar was of the opinion that such a change would not occasion any loss to the Government ; on the contrary, it would be advantageous in respect to the course of exchange and especially in reducing present premium on the remittances to Western India, but it would be prejudicial to the interests of the bankers and money dealers.³³³ The assay-master did not send any categorical reply, but held that it had "ever been the Rule of the Empire for the Magistrate to fix and regulate the value and standard of the current coin."³³⁴ Ali Ibrahim Khan warned the Resident that the introduction of Bengal type of coinage would provoke "a general opposition and Disobedience" and asked him not to introduce any reform in the currency. According to him, the proposed changes would produce slender advantage, but at the same time, beset the Resident with innumerable problems and stubborn opposition.³³⁵ The bankers and shroffs also vehemently protested against the proposed change.³³⁶

On August 11, 1789, Duncan, apprehending stubborn opposition from the shroffs of Benares who had extensive connections in money-dealing throughout India, reported to the Government that the introduction of the same type of coinage in Bengal and Benares would hamper the trade of the province and the visit of the pilgrims to Benares and also create considerable confusion for "the confined motive and irritated habits of the people."³³⁷

While making the decennial land settlement in 1790, Duncan permitted the ryots to pay their rents in the *sanawat* coins prevalent in their *parganas*.³³⁸ And, this settlement were later on declared permanent. So, the different species of *sanawat* coinage were virtually recognised in the province of Benares.

In 1793, an attempt was made to establish a gold currency in Benares. Gold *mohurs* were coined and declared a legal tender at Rs. 16, per one gold *mohur*, for all payments of salaries to the Government servants.³³⁹

On September 19, 1794, the Government asked the Resident to relate how far it would be advisable or practicable to make the currency of the provinces a "coin current" in Benares.³⁴⁰

On March 23, 1795, Duncan opined, though silver and gold coins of the standard of the present Bengal mintage might be from a specified date struck at Benares to the exclusion of all other denomination of coinage, yet the Benares coins in circulation "should not be prohibited or declared an invalid Tender, but have an authorised Batta, established with the consent of the shroffs between them and the new standard."³⁴¹ Duncan hoped, by this compromise method, he could reconcile the inhabitants to the new currency without occasioning any diminution in the property and assets of the bankers.³⁴²

Copper coins :

The copper coins current in the city and district of Benares, previous to the establishment of the mint, were minted mostly in Gorakhpur in Awadh from a species of copper called *singeree* which was brought from the northern hills. The first coinage of *paisa* at Benares was in the 23rd year of the reign of Muhammad Shah, when Gopal Das Saho struck 100 maunds of copper coin with the die of the *sicca* rupees. The weight of each *paisa* was 10 M, 3 R., the same as that of Gorukhpur, and 44 to 52 *paisas* could be exchanged for a rupee. From that period to the end of the 4th year of Shah Alam II, no *paisa* was coined in the Benares mint. In the 5th year, Bal Govind, the farmer of the mint, purchased some European copper from a follower of Qasim Ali Khan and coined it into *paisa* of 10 M., and stamped it with the die of Gorakhpur. The number exchanged for a rupee varied from 45 to 48 *paisas*. The coinage of *paisa* was again discontinued till the 17th year of the reign of Shah Alam, when Durga Charan Mitra obtained permission from Chait Singh to mint the copper coins. The new *paisa* was of 10 M. 3 R. in weight and passed current in the market at about 50 or 51 for a rupee.³⁴³

In the next year, Kashmiri Mal, obtaining from the Raja for Rs. 5,000 the exclusive privilege of buying and selling copper in the city of Benares, farmed the coinage of *paisa* and brought a large

quantity of copper from Calcutta. The weight of the *paisa* continued at 10 M. 3 R and passed in the market at about 52 or 53 per rupee. After a year or two, the coinage of *paisa* was declared free in Benares, and those who brought copper received *paisa* in return, after paying the customary duties. For 1 maund of *kadaba* copper, the merchant received 3,250 *paisas*, each weighing 10 M. 3 R. The price of one maund of such copper was Rs. 84-as. 6, and the charges for its coinage amounted to Rs. 7-as. 12. In the 21 year of the reign of Shah Alam, the Nawab of Awadh reduced the weight of copper coins to 9 M. 2 R., so one maund of copper, minted at Alahabad, yielded 3650 pieces of *paisa*, whereas at Benares it yielded 3,250 pieces of *paisa* only. On the pressure of the bankers, the Raja had to declare the Allahabad *paisa* a legal tender in Benares and the work of the Benares mint came to a standstill. In 1781 copper coinage was again begun in Benares, the size and weight being the same as that of Allahabad Mint.³⁴⁴ When Hastings came to Benares in 1784, the poor complained to him that cheapness of the *paisa*, added to the dearness of the grain, rendered them unable to subsist on the wages they received for their labour. The collector of the customs also represented that a considerable part of the duties was paid in copper coin and it made him bear a loss of 50 per cent in exchanging them for rupees.³⁴⁵

Grant took some positive steps to check this trend. He forbade the currency of *paisa* of 9 M. 2 R., and ordered that only Benares *paisa* 10 M. 3 R. and Gorakhpur *paisa* of the same weight should be used in the province. In 1786 he declared that only Trisul *paisa* should be current in the province.³⁴⁶

But this did not help the poor. Shroffs began to pay 11 percent less for the *paisa* in which the Trisul was defective. Bird, the Magistrate of Benares, wrote on the 21st May, 1813, "The labouring class of people suffer most, they receive their daily wages in Copper pice and as the Money price of labour is the same as it was before, the shroffs made to be paid in pice containing a defect in the Trisool, loses 11 percent of his earnings, the retail shop keepers, who deal chiefly with the labouring poor, are paid for their articles in pice, and are compelled to demand them from their Customers at the rate which is required by the Shroffs to whom they exchange

them for Rupees.”⁸⁴⁷ The labouring class which received wages in *paisa* had to suffer because the purchasing power of the copper coins had decreased considerably owing to the manipulation of the *mahajans*.

Thus the currency confusion remained even after the conversion of the province of Benares into the Fifth Division of the Bengal Presidency.

Notes

1. F.S.C., 12 Nov. 1781, No. 5, Hastings to Wheler, 1 Nov. 1781.
2. See Bijay Ram Sen's *Tirthamangal*, Jai Narain Ghosal's *Kasikhanda* and Altekar's *History of Benares* for details.
3. Hazin, *Kulliyet* p. 163.
4. V. A. Narain, *Duncan and Varanasi*, Appendix.
5. Valentia, *Travels*, I, Appendix No. 1, p. 407. The number of one to six storeys stone and brick houses in the city of Benares was “upwards of 12000”.
6. Deane, A., *A tour through Upper Provinces*, p. 78. Heber wrote in his *Narrative*, I, p. 428, “The city of Benares is certainly the richest as well as probably the most populous in India”.
7. Kindersley, *Letters*, Nos. 27 and 57.
8. H.P.P., 22 Apr. 1789, Malet's report, 8 Aug. 1788. For the statistical portion of the report see H.P.C., Nos. 25-30, 22 Apr. 1789.
9. *Kimkhap* or *Kamkhwab*—Silk or Satin adorned with gold or silver flowers, brocade.
10. *Jāmdāni Sāḍī*—a kind of muslim Sadi sprigged with gold or silver.
11. *Ekpātā*—a kind of superfine fabric.
12. *Sāmla*—a kind of inner garment.
13. *Gudad*—one kind of coarse silk or raw silk.
14. *Dhanukpātā*—white silk cloth, the body and thin border of which was decorated with gold and silver thread. Nowadays this is called Benarasi Sāḍī.
15. *Kārcob*—Velvet sprigged with gorgeous round tinsels.
16. *Golbadan*—embroidered cloth. This was used for making loose trousers.
17. *Masuru*—a kind of cloth made of silk and cotton thread.
18. *Phulam*—a kind of coarse cotton cloth.
19. *Āmāru*—a kind of embroidered silk cloth. Nowadays it is known as *Aurangabadi Sāḍī*.
20. Jainarain Ghosal, *Kasikhanda* as quoted in D. C. Sen's *Vanga Sahitya Parichaya*, II, pp. 1512-1513.
21. Kindersley, *Letters*, No. 57.
22. Valentia, *Travels*, I, p. 91.
23. Jai Narain Ghosal, *Kasikhanda* as quoted in D. C. Sen's *Vanga Sahitya Parichaya*, II, p. 1513 and Deane, A., *A tour through Upper Provinces*, p. 81. “We likewise approve of the advertisement which you agreed to publish expressive

of the terms upon which other persons will be allowed to reside at Benares for the purpose of dealing in Diamonds and Pearls for the Europe Market"—From Court (Pub), 31 July 1787.

24. Bijay Ram Sen, *Tirthamangal* p. 137.
25. Ibid., p. 138 ; Wynne, *Sketches of India*, p. 30 and 39.
26. Deane, A., *A tour through the Upper Provinces*, p. 77, Heber, *Narrative*, I, p. 349.
27. Deane, A., *A tour through the Upper Provinces*, p. 77.
28. Murtaza Hussain Khan, *Hadiqat—ul—aqualin*, p. 678, Valentia, *Travels*, I, p. 97.
29. Deane, A., *A tour through the Upper Provinces*, p. 81.
30. H.P.C., 26 Dec. 1787, No. 1. Barlow's report on trade and commerce of Benares.
31. Ibid.
32. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1776, No. 1, Fowke's report on trade and commerce of Benares, 19 Mar. 1776.
33. F.S.C., 26 Nov. 1764, Sec. Com., to the Chief at Patna, 26 Nov. 1764.
34. Sel. Com., 21 June 1765. Instructions to Clive, 21 June 1765.
35. Malleson, *Clive*, pp. 174-175.
36. To Court (Pub), 24 Mar. 1766.
37. H.P.P., 24 Feb. 1766.
38. Caraccioli, *Life of Clive*, II, p. 128.
39. H.P.P., 28 Jul. 1766.
40. Caraccioli, *Life of Clive*, II, p. 128.
41. Sel. Com., 27 Jan. 1768, Smith to Sel. Com., 3 Jan. 1768. The dependants of the English gentlemen were guilty of severe imposition and exactions on the local people at Mirzapore.
42. Sel. Com., 27 Jan. 1768, Smith to Sel. Com., 3 Jan. 1768.
43. Ibid.
44. Sel. Com., 27 Jan., 10 Feb. and 27 Feb. 1768.
45. Sel. Com., 27 Apr. 1768, Rumbold to Sel. Com., 10 Apr. 1768.
46. Sel. Com., 23 Jul. 1768, Sykes to Sel. Com., 13 Jul. 1768.
47. Sel. Com., 27 Apr. 1768, Sel. Com. to Rumbold, 27 Apr. 1768.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid.
50. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 810.
51. C.P.C., II, Letter No. 868.
52. C.P.C., II, Letter Nos. 915 and 918.
53. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1776, No. 1, Fowke's report, 19 Mar. 1776.
54. H.P.C., 26 Dec. 1787, No. 1, Barlow's report, 24 Aug. 1787. The importation of gold bullion considerably decreased after the Gurkha Rebellion of 1763.
55. Sel. Com., 1 Sep. 1770, Alexander to Sel. Com., 26 Aug. 1770.
56. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 42.
57. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 1, Instructions to Hastings, 23 Jun. 1773.
58. B.M. Add. MSS., No. 29212, Benares Diary of Hastings.
59. C.P.C., IV, Letter Nos. 480, 505.

60. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 2, Hastings' report to Council, 4 Oct. 1773.
61. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 7, Translation of Chait Singh's agreement relative to duties, 7 Sep. 1773.
62. F.S.C., 4 Oct. 1773, No. 2, Hastings' report, 4 Oct. 1773.
63. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 700 ; From Court (Pub), 31 July, 1787.
64. C.P.C., IV, Letter No. 769.
65. F.S.C., 24 Aug. 1775, No. 3, Instructions to Fowke, 24 Aug. 1775.
66. F.S.C., 3 Apr. 1776, No. 1, Fowke's report, 19 Mar. 1776.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Marshall, *Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, p. 96.
73. H.P.C., 28 Apr. 1777, No. 3, Board of Trade to G.-G.-in-C., 25 Apr. 1777.
74. C.P.C., V, Letter No. 1506.
75. F.S.C., 3 Dec. 1781, No. 1, Hastings to Wheler, 21 Nov. 1781.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. H.P.C., 10 Dec. 1781, No. 1, Hastings to Council, 22 Nov. 1781.
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92. C.P.C., VII, Letter Nos. 114, 206 and 207.
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94. C.P.C., VII, Letter No. 166. For example, the firewood, which was formerly sold at seven or eight maunds per rupee, was now sold at two or two and a half maunds.
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98. H.P.C., 18 May 1787, No. 13, The assistant did not possess any coercive authority but acted as a reporter to the Resident.
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111. See Chapter VI.
112. H.P. Procs., 26 Dec. 1787, Resolution of the Board, 26 Dec. 1787. The term Company's provinces meant Bengal, Bihar and Orissa where the administration of the E. I. Co. was firmly established.
113. H.P.C., 26 Mar. 1788, No. 2, Duncan to G.-G.-in-C., 25 Feb. 1788.
114. Ibid.
115. Ibid. The office of *sonah mahal* was instituted by Balwant Singh, at the solicitations of one Tarah Paakar. At that period *sannyasis* carried on trade with Nepal in piece goods of Bengal, in return for which they annually imported gold bullion to the amount of four or five lacs of rupees. Upon this gold, Tarah Paakar obtained permission to levy a duty under the pretence of acting as a broker for the sale of it. In course of years the broker was converted into a farmer. After the Gurkha Revolution of 1763, he seized the property of some of the principal *sannyasi* merchants, in consequence of which the whole fraternity abandoned the trade and importation of gold was stopped, but the farmers of the duties by a perversion of the institution of *sonah mahal* obtained permission to levy a tax upon all the specie remitted by the *sannyasis* through the banking houses of Benares. Kashaul Chand and Munnoo Lal enjoyed the profits of the farm of *sonah mahal* on payment of Rs. 600 per annum. (vide Barlow's report, 24 Aug. 1787).
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117. Ibid.
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(b) *Tarikh-i-Benares* alias *Balwantnama* (Oriental Public Library, Patna Mss) written by Ghulam Hussain Khan. The author was a trusted courtier of Raja Balwant Singh and Raja Chait Singh. It is a good and detailed history of Benares ; but a bit prejudiced in favour of the Rajas of Benares ; So I have used this book as a supplement to the work of Khairuddin. It has not yet been translated into English.

(c) *Mifta-i-Khazain* (Benares Raj Library) written by Sambhunath. The author had a very chequered career. He served under Mir Qasim and Shuja-ud-daula and acted as an agent of the *nawab-wazir* to Major Munro. He entered into the service of Francis Fowke as his *munshi*. This is a very important source to demonstrate that long before the insurrection, Chait Singh had made frantic attempts to save himself from the wrath of Warren Hastings. It contains a very detailed account of the flight of Chait Singh. Summaries of a few letters of Sambhunath are also found in *Calendar of Persian Correspondence*, Vol. V.

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